

Muḥammad



Seal of the Prophets



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by

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هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا

huwa alladhī ʿarsala rasūlahu bi-l-hudā wa dīni-l-ḥaqqi
li-yudḥhirahu ʿala-d-dīni kullih; wa kafā bi-llāhi shahīdā

He sent His Messenger with the Guidance and the *Dīn* of Truth
to exalt it over every other dīn and Allāh suffices as a witness.
(Sūratu-l-Faṭḥ 48:28)



نَاخُنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

ʾinnā naḥnu nazzalna-dḥ-dḥikra wa ʾinnā lahu laḥāfiḍḥūn
“Truly, I revealed the Dhikr and surely I will preserve it.”
(Sūratu-l-Hijr 15:9)



إِذْ خُلُوْهُمَا بِسَلَامٍ ذَٰلِكَ يَوْمُ الْخُلُوْدِ

ʾudkḥulūhā bi-salāmin ḍhalika yawmu-kḥulūd
Enter it in peace. This is the Day of Timeless Eternity.
(Sūrah Qāf 50:34)



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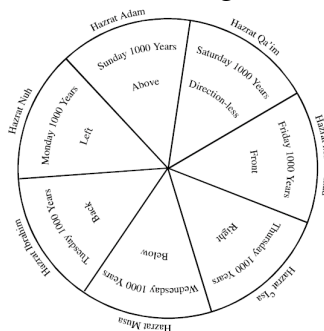
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ
وَلَكِنْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمُ النَّبِيِّينَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا
mā kāna muḥammadun abāā °aḥadin mir-rijālikum
wa lākin rasūla-llāhi wa khātama-n-nabiyyīna
wa kāna-llāhu bi-kulli shay°in °alīmā

Muḥammad is not the father of any of your men,
but the Messenger of Allāh and the Final Seal of the Prophets.
Allāh has knowledge of all things.
(Sūratu-l-°Aḥzāb 33:40)

Prophets are superior to ordinary human beings by virtue of divine inspiration and assistance (*ta°yid*). Each prophet belongs to the same essence, but they succeed one another in the universal process of seven major cycles of Revelation, expected to lead to an ultimate unveiling and liberation with the full manifestation of the essence in the person of the mysterious seventh figure of the *qā°im* (القائم) ﷺ.



Our talk today, the last of six, is on the final figure in the *hexameron* of the Resolute Prophets (أولو العزم/°ulū-l-°azm) ﷺ, who is the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, the Seal of the Prophets ﷺ, after whom there is no Prophet and no Revelation, as the *Qā°im* is not a Prophet ﷺ as such but, rather, the explainer of all prophecy, the one who clarifies the Truth concerning all that has been revealed in the past.

Prophecy is a mystery (*sirr*/سِرّ) because it is from Allāh ﷻ, so no one can grasp it by mere discourse. If it were open to all, then it would indeed be accessible to all, as discourse is an outer (exoteric/ظاهر) matter granted to all human beings. But not everyone can grasp or understand prophecy. Esoteric (*bāṭinī*/باطني) matters always prevail and more powerful than exoteric matters, which is why prophethood in the end always prevails over mere discourse.

Prophethood prevails because it is unique and without equal in time or space, whereas discourse takes place between equals. The one endowed by Allāh ﷻ with Prophethood is totally confident in the Authority of the Message that comes to him, and he knows without a doubt that it does not reach anyone else other than himself so, that there can be no dispute between him and any other.

The professionals of discourse, exoteric scholars (PhD's, professors doctors etc), lawyers (*fuqaha*³) and the pious law clerks (*‘ulema*) are many in the world and there is much contradiction and dispute due to their number. One group seek to approach the prophets to dispute and argue with them, while others are simply incapacitated due to the inimitable quality of the prophetic message; those who think themselves the equal of a prophet can never prevail against him because the prophetic message is more than mere speech (*nuṭq*).

Indeed one of the strongest arguments for the prophetic message prevailing over discourse, ruling and legal decisions is that the very people who claim to be “professionals” in the end always refer back to earlier prophetic messages, because there is no share of that prophethood and Divine law within themselves. The prophetic message always prevails by virtue of its own root and even when the pretenders try to make use of the root it comes to nothing, for they really know nothing of the Truth and their arguments bring them nothing as, for instance, the doctors of law who argued with ‘Īsā ﷺ in the temple, or the magicians who sought to undo Mūsā ﷺ, or the makers of idols who sought to refute Ibrāhīm ﷺ. As Allāh ﷻ says:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَ عَلَىٰ الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا

huwa alladhī ‘arsala rasūlahu bi-l-hudā wa dīni-l-ḥaqqi
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He sent His Messenger with the Guidance and the *Dīn* of Truth to exalt it over every other dīn and Allāh suffices as a witness.

(Sūratu-l-Faṭḥ 48:28)

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

Furthermore, prophets ﷺ are members of a single body stretched out in time and space and there is a continuity and affinity between them, especially those who succeed one another. Both have Truth by virtue of their spiritual essence being one and the same, for “the rank of the preceding prophetic messenger is like the stage of potentiality, and the rank of the succeeding prophetic messenger is like the stage of actuality; and nothing even comes to the stage of actuality unless it has been at the stage of potentiality. Therefore it is necessary for that prophetic messenger who come next, since he is at the stage of actuality, to confirm the truthfulness of the one who is at the stage of potentiality.”¹

Think here of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and reflect that his predecessor, ʿĪsā ﷺ is mentioned twenty-five times in the Qurʾan and he ﷺ himself, is mentioned only four times, and we only know of the existence of al-Mahdi ﷺ though numerous ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ. As in *al-Mustadrik*², where Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī reported the Messenger ﷺ said: “At the end of the time of my ʿummah, the Mahdi will appear. Allāh will grant him rain, the earth will bring forth its fruits, he will give a lot of money, cattle will increase and the ummah will become great. He will rule for seven or eight years.”

Thus, if the previous prophetic messenger does not announce the subsequent prophetic messenger – that is the one whose coming forth is bound to occur – this predecessor will have given evidence of his own knowledge and noble rank, having been informed of that Mystery which Allāh ﷻ conferred and revealed only to His prophets ﷺ; moreover he will have been freed of envy, which is the very antithesis of his pure and exalted station.

Think here of ʿĪsā ﷺ foretelling the coming of the “Paraclete” (παράκλητος) Muhammad ﷺ the promised ‘Comforter’ not for one nation but for all, in John 14:26:

“But the Comforter, the Paraclete, whom the Father will send in my name shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

1. This is from *Kashf al-Mahjub* of as-Sijistanī to whom I am deeply indebted for much of my understanding of this subject.
2. *Mustadrak al-Hakim*, 4: 557-558; this is a ḥadīth whose isnād is ṣaḥīḥ.

The possessor of prophethood contemplates within himself things of such magnitude and power as cannot be described. If Allāh ﷻ does not guard him from pride he might fall into the trap of his own eminence in Reality (*ḥaqiqah*), so Allāh ﷻ makes him aware of the coming of one after him – and moreover, of those glories that exist for him in the treasure house of Allāh ﷻ, those shining lights of the spiritual domain (*malakūt/ملکوت*). So He ﷻ causes his servants to be aware of their own modesty and submission (*ʿislām*) by announcing the noble rank and glory of those who shall come after them.

Allāh ﷻ made it necessary for Himself to take care of His proof and to send His Prophets ﷺ not to privilege any one Prophet ﷺ in particular for the reason is that time does not remain unchanged but rather it rotates and causes people to change according to the motion of the stars in the skies and the fact that in their rotation they travel through the signs of the zodiac and the degrees of the heavenly spheres. In sending prophets Allāh ﷻ has no purpose other than the benefit of humans. He ﷻ does so for the sake of what will be best for the human beings of that period of time so that they will have some understanding and knowledge of this world and the next.

What we have stated is true, for time does not remain unchanged, and it follows that the periods of authority or ascendancy must vary just like time. Given that the world is rotating and the moral and ethical norms of the people in this changing world turn in various ways, it follows that there must be a prophet for each time specifically since each time is different and it is not possible in different times to have one and the same prophet. If one and the same prophet would manage all the periods of time he would be unable to lead the affairs of everybody to their fulfillment and could not take care of all. It is for this reason that the proof of Allāh ﷻ has not established His Rule and Revelation with one prophet alone.

Had Allāh ﷻ sent no more than one prophet it would be inconceivable that this one prophet alone would have come up with all the religious laws, nor would he have realized all the spiritual realities that are deposited within them, nor would he have grasped the meanings made accessible through the books that came from the tongues of subsequent prophets. For that which was allotted to the prior prophets is only a little of the lights from the spiritual domain of Allāh ﷻ and of those times, books, and laws of the later prophets who are privileged to find the way into the spiritual domain.

The word of Allāh ﷻ is the proof (*hujjah*) of Allāh ﷻ for the servants of Allāh ﷻ. If this were not so this would amount to invalidation of the proof of Allāh ﷻ, and Allāh ﷻ does not invalidate His own proof rather He ﷻ keeps His ﷻ own proof (i.e. the particular Prophet ﷺ of his time) valid and manifest so as to eliminate the invalid (*baṭil*) and thus it has been verified that the proof of the law is not established by one prophet alone.

On the other hand, had Allāh ﷻ not brought forth prophets and had He ﷻ postponed revelation until the Seal of the Prophets ﷺ manifested and come forth and would have graced that time with the clearly spoken Qurʾān and the law of the true religion (*shariʿatu-l-ḥanifi*). the people of the earlier periods would have been at a great loss for lack of the proof of Allāh ﷻ and Allāh ﷻ would have thus rendered invalid His ﷻ own proof, It is inconceivable for Allāh ﷻ, Who is Mercy itself, to render His own proof (the Prophet ﷺ of his time) invalid over time, leaving the people bereft of guidance and hope. Sending prophets was a necessity in order to provide that guidance and hope. That this is so verifies that the proof of Allāh ﷻ is not established with one prophet but by many over time.

Allāh ﷻ says:

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ

°inna rabbakumu-llāhu-l-ladhī

kḥalaqa-s-samawāti wa-l-°arḍa fī sittati ayyāmin

Your Lord is Allah,

Who created the heavens and the earth in six days

(Sūratu-l-°Aʿraf 7:54)

and also:

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ

huwa-l-ladhī kḥalaqa-s-samawāti wa-l-°arḍa fī sittati ayyāmin

Who created the heavens and the earth in six days

(Sūratu-l-Ḥadīd 57:54)

In the the outer (*dḥahiri*) understanding it is days or aeons that are referred to, but in the inner or esoteric (*bāṭini*) meaning, Allāh ﷻ is referring to that *hexameron* of the Six Resolute Prophets ﷺ whom we referred to in the beginning of this exposition (*bayān*/بيان).

“Truly, the likeness of °Īsā, in the sight of Allāh, is as °Ādam; He created him of dust, then He said unto him “Be”, and he was.” (3:59)

And when ʿĪsā ﷺ ibn Maryam said, “Children of Israel. I am indeed the messenger to you, confirming the Torah that is before me, and giving good tidings of a Messenger who shall come after me, whose name shall be the praised one.” (61:6)

And that is Muḥammad ﷺ, Seal of the Prophets ﷺ.

And in this we can envision the entire cycle beginning with ʿĀdam through Nūḥ, Ibrāhīm, Mūsa, ʿĪsā and Muḥammad ﷺ.

Revelation and prophecy is not a flat circle as so many of the new agers and universalists would have us think, but rather it is a four dimensional spiral in time and space, and hopefully now we can *see* more clearly the reason why this is manifestly true.

I have spoken and written about this many times before, but with the help and insight I have gained from my readings in the *Kashf al-Mahjub* of as-Sijistanī I have gotten a much clearer understanding of the mechanics of the prophetic progression.

We also know through ḥadīth that Allāh ﷻ sent some 124,000 messengers (a hyperbolic number meaning many) and, through what is revealed in Qurʾān, that Allāh ﷻ sent a messenger to all peoples.

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ رَسُولَهُمْ قُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

wa li-kulli ʿummatin rāsūlun fa-ʾidhā jāʾa rāsūluhum
quḍiya baynahum bi-l-qist : wa hum lā yuḍḥlamūn

and every community has had a messenger;
and only after their messenger has appeared
[and delivered his message]

is judgment passed on them, in all fairness;
and never are they wronged.

(Sūrah Yūnūs 10:47)

We also know that there is a difference between a messenger (*rasūl*/رسول) meaning one who carries or brings a prophetic message and an awakener (*nabī*/نبي) or prophet who simply calls to Allāh ﷻ.

In the case of ʿĀdam ﷺ the message was carried by his singular son Seth ﷺ (whose *maqām* is located outside Lucknow in UP) and thence to the whole of the subcontinent (through Shankara and those who followed him) in the form of the *darsanas* on Advaita (Vedanta) Hinduism and the proto-Mahāvakyā (महावाक्य) “*sub ek*” meaning, “All is One”, exactly corresponding to the opening ʾāyāt of Sūratu-l-ʾIkhlāṣ, “*qul hu Allāhu aḥad*” – “Say: Hū - Allāh is One.”

With Nūḥ ﷺ the *Book* is in the form of the entire Semitic language which is carried across the whole mid-east in various forms (Proto-Semitic Syriac, Hebrew, Arabic, Amharic, Tigrinya, Ugaritic, Phoenician, Aramaic, Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic, and South Arabian and Ge'ez which all sprang from the tongue of his son Shām (Shem or Sam) and are spoken by some 270 million people as a daily language and by many more in the form of sacred languages of Revelation and liturgy such as the Qur'ān and 'Injil and Tanakh and others we do not even know of, but which existed and probably continue to exist in secret forms throughout East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula including Shām and across the Fertile Crescent Mesopotamia, Basra and down into the west coast of Irān.

Whilst it may seem strange to some to think of a language or a tongue as a '*Book*', when you reflect deeply on it, it is not strange at all and moreover when you begin to study Semitic language you begin to realise why it is the "carrier" of Revelation on the tongues of so many prophets and messengers including the 25 named in Qur'ān.

Adam, Idrīs (Enoch), Nūḥ (Noah), Hūd, Saliḥ, Ibrāhīm (Abraham), Isma'īl (Ishmael), Ishaq (Isaac), Lūt (Lot), Ya'qūb (Jacob), Yūsuf (Joseph), Shu'aib (Jethro), Ayyūb, (Job), Mūsā (Moses), Hārūn (Aaron), Dhū-l-kifl (Ezekiel), Dawūd (David), Sulayman (Soloman), 'Ilīās (Elias), al-Yasa' (Elisha), Yūnus (Jonah), Zakariyya (Zechariah), Yaḥya (John), 'Īsā (Jesus), Muḥammad ﷺ.

You may ask why it a carrier and the answer will come if you look to the unique mathematical structure of the Semitic language.

For instance, and appropriately enough, word roots are not themselves syllables or words, but instead are isolated sets of consonants (usually three, making a so-called trilateral root). Words are composed out of roots not so much by adding prefixes or suffixes, but rather by filling in the vowels between the root consonants (although prefixes and suffixes are often added as well). For example, in Arabic, the root meaning of "write" has the form of k-t-b (ك ت ب). From this root, words are formed by filling in the vowels, e.g. kitāb "book", kutub "books", kātib "writer", kuttāb "writers", kataba "he wrote", yaktubu "he writes". etc.

As you can see or hear in English, for instance, rather than there being a single code (kātābā) we have books, writers, libraries etc. none of which are cognate or show any relatedness to one another.

Moreover each tri-lateral code (k^{aṭab^a}) can potentially produce 126 different words or words in different tenses all containing the single root, thus alerting the reader or reciter that the subject is “books” or “writing” or the storage place of books” or even, today, machines that write books such as a typewriter (ʾaktaba-l-kātib/اكتب الكاتب).

The benefit and advantage of such a system is immediately clear in that a reader need know only a certain root and the system by which words are formed to know what is being spoken or referred to.

Whereas, for instance, written Mandarin requires of an erudite reader the knowledge of five to seven thousand different pictographs to reach functional literacy, one thousand plus roots (or less) will give the Semitic reader a similar degree of fluency and functionality.

Paradigm of a regular Classical Arabic verb:

Form I (k^{aṭab^a}) meaning he wrote (yaktubu)

		Past	Present Indicative	
Singular				
	1st	katab-tu	كَتَبْتُ	'a-ktub-u أَكْتُبُ
2nd	masculine	katab-ta	كَتَبْتَ	ta-ktub-u تَكْتُبُ
	feminine	katab-ti	كَتَبْتِ	ta-ktub-īna تَكْتُبِينَ
3rd	masculine	katab-a	كَتَبَ	ya-ktub-u يَكْتُبُ
	feminine	katab-at	كَتَبَتْ	ta-ktub-u تَكْتُبُ
Dual				
2nd	masculine & feminine	katab-tumā	كَتَبْتُمَا	ta-ktub-āni تَكْتُبَانِ
3rd	masculine	katab-ā	كَتَبَا	ya-ktub-āni يَكْتُبَانِ
	feminine	katab-atā	كَتَبَتَا	ta-ktub-āni تَكْتُبَانِ
Plural				
	1st	katab-nā	كَتَبْنَا	na-ktub-u نَكْتُبُ
2nd	masculine	katab-tum	كَتَبْتُمْ	ta-ktub-ūna تَكْتُبُونَ
	feminine	katab-tunna	كَتَبْتُنَّ	ta-ktub-na تَكْتُبْنَ
3rd	masculine	katab-ū	كَتَبُوا	ya-ktub-ūna يَكْتُبُونَ
	feminine	katab-na	كَتَبْنَ	ya-ktub-na يَكْتُبْنَ

إِنَّ هَذَا فِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَى • صُحُفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى

°inna hadḥa lafi-ṣ-ṣuḥufi-l-°ūla • ṣuḥufi ibrahīma wa mūsā
Truly, this is in the previous scrolls, the scrolls of Ibrāhīm and Mūsā
(Sūratu-l-°A°la 87:19)

Here Allāh ﷻ refers to the Scrolls of Ibrāhīm ﷺ, which most Muslim scholars are generally agreed upon no longer survive, and so this is a reference to what is to us is a lost body of scripture. Scrolls of Ibrāhīm ﷺ are understood by Muslims to refer to certain revelations Ibrāhīm ﷺ received, which he would have then transmitted in writing. The exact contents of the revelation are not described in the Qur°an by Allāh ﷻ but there are many speculations regarding them, not the least being their putative later-day translation by Joseph Smith. Certain assumptions have been made regarding them including that these writings were the teachings delivered by Ibrāhīm ﷺ to the people of Mesopotamia in order to revise and correct the polytheistic teachings in the land of his birth.

However Allāh ﷻ says regarding all of this:

قُلْ رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ بِعَدَّتِهِمْ مَا يَعْلَمُهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ فَلَا تُمَارِ فِيهِمْ إِلَّا مِرَاءً ظَاهِرًا وَلَا تَسْتَنِقِ
فِيهِمْ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدًا

qul rabbī °a°amu bi°iddatihim mā ya°lamuhum °illā qalīlun
falā tumāri fihim °illā mirā°an ḍḥahiran
wa lā tastafti fihim minhum aḥadā

So do not argue about them except with an obvious argument and do not inquire about them from anyone [among the storytellers].

(Sūratu-l-Kahf 18:22)

The reason being that Allāh ﷻ is declaring He Himself has related what needs to be verified in another °āyāt of Sūratu-l-Kahf.

خُنْ نَقَصَ عَلَيْكَ بَبَاهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ

naḥnu naquṣṣu °alayka nabāhum bi-l-ḥaqq

“It is We who relate to you, [O Muḥammad], their story in truth.”

(Sūratu-l-Kahf 18:13)

Therefore relating to any ascription of the Scrolls of °Ibrāhīm (or other issues) from the People of the Book or seeking their understanding of the issue is not required nor recommended for Muslims.

The Prophet ﷺ did say to ʿAbū Dharr (أبو ذر الغفاري) when he asked him about the scrolls of Ibrahim (إبراهيم), “They were all proverbs. There was in them, “The intelligent man, as long as his intelligence has not been overcome, must have insight into his epoch, occupy himself with his affair and guard his tongue, and whoever reckons his speech to be a part of his action will not be about to speak except on what concerns him.””

Then going on to the Scrolls of Mūsā (موسى) ʿAbū Dharr asked “By my father and mother [may you be ransomed], what was there in the scrolls of Mūsā?” He said, “They were all admonitions. In them there was: ‘How astonishing is one who is sure of the Fire, how can he laugh? How astonishing is one who is sure of death, how can he rejoice? How astonishing is one who sees the world and its overturning its people, how can he be at ease in it? How astonishing is one who is certain of the decree and then becomes angry! And how astonishing is one who is sure of the reckoning and does not act!’”

I said, “By my father and mother [may you be ransomed], does anything remain from that which was in their scrolls?” He said,

“Indeed whoever purifies himself shall achieve success,

And remembers the Name of his Lord and prays.

No! You prefer the life of this world;

Although the Hereafter is better and more lasting.

Verily! This is in the former Scriptures.

The Scriptures of ʿIbrāhīm and Mūsā.”

(Sūratu-lʿAʿla 87:14-19)

I said, “By my father and mother [may you be ransomed], advise me.” He said, “I advise you to have *taqwa* (consciousness) of Allāh ﷻ, for it is the head of all of your affair.”

I said, “Increase me!” He said, “You must recite (*tilawah*/تلاوة) the Qurʾān and remember Allāh ﷻ a great deal, because He remembers you in Heaven.”

I said, “Increase me!” He said, “You must wage jihad, for it is the monasticism of believers.”

I said, “Increase me!” He said, “You must take to silence, because it will repel the shayṭān from you and it will be a help to you in the matter of your *dīn*.”

I said, “Increase me!” He said, “Tell the truth even if it is bitter.”

On the other hand the Prophet ﷺ also said, “the Scripture of Mūsā is the Torah and only Allāh ﷻ knows about the Scripture of Abraham.” (*Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn ʿAbbās*)³



What then exactly is the Torah?

This is a very difficult question to answer and one has to start out by asking, “Which Torah?” The one that existed before the time of the destruction of the First Temple; or after the Babylonian captivity when the People of the Book, the Muslims of their time, had been without the scrolls of the Torah for more than 70 years and the science of memorization (*ḥifḍ*/حفظ) was not then an integral part of ‘religion’; or do we ask about the Torah that existed during the Second Temple Period or perhaps the later Alexandrian revision or the perhaps the Masoretic text or the Septuagint text?

Which of these is the Torah?

Torah is the Hebrew word: תּוֹרָה signifying “Instruction” or “Teaching” and has a range of meanings: it can most specifically mean the first five books of the Tanakh, it can mean this, plus the rabbinic commentaries on it, it can mean the continued narrative from Genesis to the end of the Tanakh, it can even mean the totality of Jewish teaching and practice. Common to all these meanings, Torah consists of the foundational narrative of the Jewish people: their call into being by Yahweh (euphemistically called HaShem by Jews and denoted in English translations of the Bible as the LORD), their trials and tribulations, and their covenant with their G-d, which involves following a way of life embodied in a set of religious obligations and laws (*halakha*/הלכה) meaning the path one walks.

In its most specific meaning, it consists of the first five books of the Tanakh written in Biblical Hebrew.

The names of each of these books in Hebrew are taken from the first phrase in each book: *Beresht* (“In [the] beginning”, Genesis), *Shemot* (“Names”, Exodus), *Vayikra* (“He called”, Leviticus), *Bamidbar* (“In the desert”, Numbers) and *Devarim* (“Words”, Deuteronomy).

3. (The quotes above were taken from: *The Complete Forty Hadith*, (Revised edition with the Arabic texts) by ʿImām an-Nawawī. Commentary of hadith number 12, Pages 59-61.)

In rabbinic literature the word Torah denotes both these five books, Torah Shebichtav (תורה שבכתב, “Torah that is written”), and an Oral Torah, Torah Shebe’al Peh (תורה שבעל פה, “Torah that is spoken”). The Oral Torah consists of the traditional interpretations and amplifications handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation and now embodied in the Talmud and Midrash.

According to religious tradition, all of the teachings found in the Torah, both written and oral, were given by *HaShem* to Moses, some of them at Mount Sinai and others at the Tabernacle, and all the teachings were written down by Moses, which resulted in the Torah that exists today. According to a Midrash, the Torah was created prior to the creation of the world, and was used as the blueprint for Creation. The majority of Biblical scholars believe that the written books were a product of the Babylonian exile (c. 600 BCE) and that it was completed in the Persian period (c. 400 BCE).

In turn beginning in around the eighth century the Masoretes fixed the reading of the text by the introduction of the vowel-signs, the accents, and the signs which affect the reading of the consonants (*daghesh*, *mappik*, *raphe*, and the diacritical point to distinguish between the letters ‘*sin*’ and ‘*shin*’). The pronunciation they thus brought about was no invention, but made the text more readable and understandable. The MT was primarily copied, edited and distributed by a group of Egyptian Jews known as the Masoretes between the 7th and 10th centuries CE. Though the consonants differ little from the text generally accepted in the early 2nd century (and differ little from some Qumran texts that are even older), it has numerous differences of both greater and lesser significance when compared to (extant 4th century) manuscripts of the Septuagint.

The Masoretic Text (MT) is now the authoritative Hebrew text of the Jewish Bible. While the Masoretic Text defines the books of the Jewish canon, more importantly it also defines the precise letter-text of these biblical books, with their vocalization and accentuation known as the Masorah. The MT is also widely used as the basis for translations of the Old Testament in Protestant Bibles, and in recent years (since 1943) for some Catholic Bibles, although the Eastern Orthodox continue to use the Septuagint, as they hold it to be divinely inspired. In modern times the Dead Sea Scrolls have shown the MT to be nearly identical to some texts of the Tanakh dating from 200 BCE but different from others.

The Septuagint is a Greek translation (made in the 3rd to 2nd centuries BCE) of the Hebrew Scriptures that was in popular use in Egypt and Israel (and that is often quoted in the New Testament, especially by the Apostle Paul).

The Hebrew word *mesorah* (מסורה) refers to the transmission of a tradition. In a very broad sense it can refer to the entire chain of Jewish tradition but in reference to the Masoretic Text the word *mesorah* has a very important specific meaning: the diacritic markings of the text of the Hebrew Bible and concise marginal notes in manuscripts (and later printings) of the Hebrew Bible which note textual details about the precise sounding of words.

Here remember what we said earlier about Semitic languages, of which Hebrew is one, being composed of tri-lateral roots composed of consonants, and imagine that you no longer knew the vowels which went in between. Take the word *house* in English and leave out the vowels and you have *h s e*: is it *house* or *horse*? Then imagine a text of a thousand pages or more which contains the basic laws of life and imagine you can't tell a house from a horse.

And, by the way, the same thing happened to the Qur'ānic text when the numbers and races of Muslims became so numerous they didn't know a *house* from a *horse* and so the system of *tashkil* (vowelization) or diacritical marks was invented to help non-Arabs to better pronounce and grasp the Qur'ānic text they were reading.

Very few manuscripts are said to have survived the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. This both drastically reduced the number of variants in circulation, and gave a new urgency that the text must be preserved against the loss of knowledge of exact pronunciation.

By long tradition, a ritual Torah scroll may contain only the Hebrew consonantal text – nothing may be added, nothing taken away. which is why the early Muslim calligraphers put the *tashkil* in red to make the addition obvious as they feared innovation (*bid'ah*). However, perhaps because they were intended for personal study rather than ritual use, the Masoretic codices provide extensive additional material, called *masorah*, to show correct pronunciation and cantillation, protect against scribal errors, and annotate possible variants. The manuscripts thus include vowel points, pronunciation marks and stress accents in the text, short annotations in the side margins, and longer more extensive notes in the upper and lower margins which were collected at the end of each book.

However there were still further controversies in the acceptance or rejection of the Septuagint version or the Masoretic version.

Adam Clarke, an 18th Century Anglican scholar, makes it clear that the work of the Masoretes is, in reality, a commentary which has been integrated into the body of Scripture. However, Clarke points out that the Hebrew of the Masoretic Text (Masoretic Hebrew) is quite different from the Hebrew of the Patriarchs, (Ancient Hebrew) in which Old Covenant Scripture was originally written.

In the General Preface of his commentary on the Scripture, published in 1810, Clarke writes:

“The Masorets were the most extensive Jewish commentators which that nation could ever boast. The system of punctuation, probably invented by them, is a continual gloss on the Law and the Prophets; their vowel points, and prosaic and metrical accents, &c., give every word to which they are affixed a peculiar kind of meaning, which in their simple state, multitudes of them can by no means bear. The vowel points alone add whole conjugations to the language. This system is one of the most artificial, particular, and extensive comments ever written on the Word of G-d; for there is not one word in the Bible that is not the subject of a particular gloss through its influence. This school is supposed to have commenced about 450 years before our Lord, and to have extended down to AD1030. Some think it did not commence before the 5th century A.D.”

“Even without adding to, deleting from, or changing a single letter of the Ancient Hebrew manuscripts of Scripture, pointing gave the Masorete power to dramatically change the meaning of almost any given passage of Scripture, for the prerogative of selecting vowels, is, to a large extent, the prerogative of selecting words! As a crude example, consider how the meaning of an English sentence might be changed by substitution of the word “*poor*” for the word “*pure*” – a substitution which may be effected by a simple change of vowels.

Clarke appears to be one of the few commentators who have seen fully the significance of the Masoretic Text – namely, that it is a new “version” of the Scripture, written in a new language. Obviously, Hebrew scholars were aware of this fact and they should have called attention to the difference between Ancient Hebrew and the language of the Masoretes, and should have differentiated the two, by use of names such as Ancient Hebrew and Masoretic Hebrew, but they didn’t, and so further clouded the issue.

In the end what all of this means it is that is almost next to impossible, given the Babylonian, Septuagint and Masoretic texts, to really without question know exactly what the Torah is or isn't.

That is not a very good recommendation for a text that purports to be the general and specific guide to life – worldly and spiritual.

What we do know is that toward the end of the 1st century AD and into the 2nd century, the Talmudic, Edomite Jews were actively attacking the Greek Septuagint because it was used by the Christians. They felt that they could discredit the Christians merely for the reason that they used Greek, and at the same time, they began twisting the Hebrew Scriptures to try and disprove that Jesus was the true Messiah. This controversy roared on until at least the 4th and 5th centuries AD.

The early Catholics attacked the Vulgate translation of Jerome because it was the first to be based upon Hebrew, and they continued for a very long time to use the Old Latin because it was based upon the Greek Septuagint. One of the most famous examples of how the Jews attacked the Greek Septuagint regarded the word virgin. The particular verse in question is Isaiah 7:14, which reads in the Greek Septuagint:

“Therefore, the Master Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will conceive in the womb, and will bring forth a Son, and you will call His Name, Emmanuel.”

In the Greek, the word for virgin is *parthenos* (παρθένα), and it literally means a virgin. In the Masoretic Text, however, the word is *almah* which means a young girl. The usual Hebrew word for virgin, and the word in every case translated virgin in the Revised Version, is *bethuwlah*. This verse is quoted from Isaiah in the Christian Scriptures in Matthew 1:23. The Jews attacked the Septuagint from the beginning because they claimed that it had been corrupted by the Christians and that the Christians changed the word in the Septuagint to read *virgin* instead of *young woman* so that it would support the reading in Matthew. Of course, the Edomite Jews did not believe that Jesus was the true Messiah; this was why they were attacking the Septuagint. In reality the Jews are the ones who changed the Hebrew, replacing the word *virgin* with *young woman*. The early motive of the Edomite Jews was to destroy Christianity, not just the Septuagint. But the Christians did not give in, so the Jews changed their strategy.

They instead decided to corrupt the Old Testament and gain control of the Christians by giving them a corrupted Old Testament. By the 3rd century they began collecting every Hebrew manuscript they could, and this was easy to do because the Christians used the Greek Septuagint and cared little for the Hebrew. They then began revising the Hebrew documents to support their Jewish contentions. By the time of Jerome, they began taking the soft approach and gave Jerome their new Hebrew edition for him to use in his translation. But, as we said before, the Christians at first rejected the Vulgate. So the Jews continued working on their text. From the 1st century to the middle of the 5th century, they called themselves Talmudists; from the 5th century to the completion of their text in the 10th-11th centuries, they called themselves Masoretes.

At the end of this time, all other Hebrew manuscripts except for the Masoretic Text disappeared. The fact is that they were destroyed by the same people who had gathered them up – the Talmudic, Masoretic Jews who then began presenting themselves as the diligent preservers of the Hebrew Bible and began deceiving Christians. They no longer blatantly attacked the Septuagint but rather touted themselves as being faithful servants of G-d. To this end, when the Masoretic Text was finished, they counted every letter and word and contrived mechanisms to insure that the manuscripts would be faithfully transmitted, but they did not bother to account for the editing and corruption that they themselves had been doing for the previous 600-700 years. The early English translations of the Bible were based upon the Latin Vulgate, but the Jews intended to deceive the unknowing Christians into translating their Bibles from the Hebrew Masoretic Text. So their new strategy was to win over the Hebrew-ignorant Christians, but the old motives were always there. At this time, they had to do an about-face on the issue of virgin. They had learned that the Christians would not accept the Hebrew as long as such blatant blasphemies were contained in it.

So by now dear reader you can see what the problem is. No one really knows what the Torah really is or really isn't or which it is in Truth so how can you use such a "Book" as a guide for life?

Today the majority of academic scholars accept the theory that the Torah does not have a single author, and that its composition took place over centuries.

From the late 19th century there was a general consensus around the documentary hypothesis, which suggests that the five books were created c. 450 BCE by combining four originally independent sources, known as the Jahwist, or J (c. 900 BCE), the Elohist, or E (c. 800 BCE), the Deuteronomist, or D, (c. 600 BCE), and the Priestly source, or P (c. 500 BCE).

What exists then is a hypothesis called the documentary hypothesis, (DH) (sometimes called the Wellhausen hypothesis), which proposes that the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) was derived from originally independent, parallel and complete narratives, which were subsequently combined into the current form by a series of redactors (critical editors). The number of these is usually set at four, but this is not an essential part of the hypothesis.

The hypothesis was developed in the 18th and 19th centuries from the attempt to reconcile inconsistencies in the biblical text. By the end of the 19th century it was generally agreed that there were four main sources, combined into their final form by a series of redactors, R. These four sources came to be known as the Yahwist, or Jahwist, J (J being the German equivalent of the English letter Y); the Elohist, E; the Deuteronomist, D, (the name comes from the Book of Deuteronomy, D's contribution to the Torah); and the Priestly Writer, P.

Julius Wellhausen's contribution was to order these sources chronologically as JEDP, giving them a coherent setting in the evolving religious history of Israel, which he saw as one of ever-increasing priestly power. Wellhausen's formulation was:

* the Yahwist source (J) : written c. 950 BC in the southern Kingdom of Judah.

* the Elohist source (E) : written c. 850 BC in the northern Kingdom of Israel.

* the Deuteronomist (D) : written c. 600 BC in Jerusalem during a period of religious reform.

* the Priestly source (P) : written c. 500 BC by Kohanim (Jewish priests) in exile in Babylon.

This general agreement began to break down in the late 1970s, and today there are many theories but no consensus, or even majority viewpoint. In short – no one really knows.



Variations of the documentary hypothesis remain popular, especially in America and Occupied Palestine (Israel), and the identification of distinctive Deuteronomistic and Priestly theologies and vocabularies remains widespread, but they are used to form new approaches suggesting that the books were combined gradually over time by the slow accumulation of “fragments” of text, or that a basic text was “supplemented” by later authors/editors. At the same time there has been a tendency to bring the origins of the Pentateuch further forward in time, and the most recent proposals place it in 5th century Judah under the Persian empire.

While the hypothesis has been increasingly challenged by other models in the last part of the 20th century, its terminology and insights continue to provide the framework for modern theories on the origins of the Torah.

This has become even more difficult with the surfacing of the Samaritan text.

After the destruction of the Second Temple, the Israelites split into three groups, each with their own text: The rabbis took the Masoretic text for their own, the Samaritans, a Jewish sect, took theirs, and the early Christians used much of a different version called the Septuagint but a Masoretic version translated into Greek in the 2nd century BCE is what later become the Christian Bible.

According to Ulrich, the Samaritan Torah provides a more coherent reading because the story flows better in its text. “There are whole passages of stories missing from the Masoretic version,” he said. “A lot of the stories in Exodus and Deuteronomy are missing parts of the conversation, leaving the reader alone to do much assumption as the story goes on. In the Samaritan Torah, however, these gaps are filled, providing a smoother encounter of what actually happened.”

James Charlesworth, a professor of New Testament Language and Literature at Princeton University’s Department of Biblical studies, said the Samaritan Torah is his preferred version for some readings of the Bible. “As the stories and histories go, the Samaritan Pentateuch appears to be more favorable because the voice of the text reads more clear[ly],” he said. “In my judgment, the Masoretic version has some corrupt parts of it, and the Samaritan Torah is the best reading we have. There are sentences scholars are left to either reinterpret or simply ignore because they seem they don’t belong.”

Charlesworth believes Jews and Christians have not shown the Samaritan text the proper respect it deserves: Thousands of years ago, Samaritans and Jews had a shared interest in both scriptures, but the Samaritan Torah later became shunned. Charlesworth said this English translation would finally provide the academic world insight into the origins of the development of scripture.

The Samaritans claim their Torah is older and more authentic: “It’s more logical that a group of people who’ve lived in one place for thousands of years have kept their Torah preserved,” Tsedaka asserted, “as compared to a people who have moved all over the world.”

But some Bible critics side with the Masoretic version, citing it as older and, indeed, more authentic. Referring to a principal of textual criticism called *lectio difficilior potior*, which means that a harder reading of a text is preferred to an easier reading, Yeshiva University’s Aaron Koller said some scholars believe the Samaritan Torah’s text, which presents fewer interpretive problems, proves that it had been tampered with. “Some scholars believe someone took an original version of the Torah and simplified it to the Samaritan version,” he explained. “It’s hard to believe a difficult reading of a text is original, because why would someone change a text to make it unclear? Rather, when a text is simplified, it’s easier to believe that the text was altered in order to make it simpler.”

Koller noted that the consensus view held by most Bible scholars is that the Masoretic version of the Torah is the older, original version. The structural changes of the Samaritan Torah give reason to believe it’s been changed, he said, but that should not stop people from studying it.

Both should be studied, he said, to understand the history of interpretations of the Torah—a book that continues to unfold with meaning as time goes on.

6,000 differences between the two Torahs can be split into two categories: 3,000 of the differences are orthographical, meaning there are spelling differences or additional words placed in the text, while the other 3,000 are more significant in changing the Torah’s narrative. Some of the orthographical changes were made simply to help make the story read more smoothly.



In Exodus 12:40, for example, the Masoretic text reads: “The length of the time the Israelites lived in Egypt was 430 years,” a sentence that has created massive chronological problems for Jewish historians, since there is no way to make the genealogies last that long. In the Samaritan version, however, the text reads: “The length of time the Israelites lived in Canaan and in Egypt was 430 years.”

Earlier in Exodus, in 4:25, the Samaritan Torah offers an alternative narrative to the slightly problematic story about the son of Moses not being circumcised when an angel “sought to kill him.” The thought that Moses did not circumcise his son, as the Masoretic text states, seems inconceivable to many Jewish commentators, Tsedaka noted. The Samaritan text, however, reads that it was the wife of Moses, Tziporah, who had to “*circumcise her blocked heart*” by cutting off her belief in the idol-worshiping ways of Midyan, her homeland. A mention of an “internal circumcision” is later found in Deuteronomy 10:16 in both versions, which reads, “circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer.”

But again – no one really knows. And this is the point. Yes there were the scrolls of ʾIbrāhīm and Mūsā ﷺ but in this time, and indeed for more than two millenia at least, no one knows what is truly in them and, yes, we know that they would not have been were it not for Shām or Sam and his tongue but just what the words are or were, we do not know; and yes, we know that Advaita Vedanta, or Non-Dualist Hinduism, existed and in certain, arguably corrupted, ways continues to exist, but of what utility is it for us in living our lives given that one can never “become” a Hindu any more than one can become a “Jew” for Hindus and Jews, and also Zoroastrians or Parsis, are what they are by dint of parentage and birth.

So the fact that ʾĀdam ﷺ and Nūh ﷺ and ʾIbrāhīm ﷺ and Mūsā ﷺ were certainly prophets from Allāh ﷻ, the messages they bore have been lost or corrupted in time and can serve neither us nor, in Truth, anyone to walk life’s path and understand its meaning as intended by the Creator, Allāh *subḥānahu wa taʿāla*.

This leaves us, in the round of the Resolute Prophets ﷺ, with the need to consider what is left of the teaching of ʿĪsā ﷺ, much of which I covered in my earlier talk on *Jesus or ʿĪsā* ﷺ. This complete talk is available in print, video and mp3 (as are many others in this series) through our website: GreenMountainSchool.Org.

Again the effort behind this bayān is to bring the reader to the understanding of why Muḥammad ﷺ is the Seal of the Prophets ﷺ.

وَفَقَيْنَا عَلَيَّ أَثَارَ هَرَبِ عِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ
وَأْتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ فِيهِ هُدًى وَتُورَةٌ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ
وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

wa qaffaynā °alā °āthhārihim bi-°īsa-ibni maryama
muṣaddiqan limā bayna yadayhi mina-t-tawrāti
wa °ātaynāhu-l-°injīla fihi hudan wa nūrun
wa muṣaddiqan limā bayna yadayhi mina-t-tawrāti
wa hudan wa mow°idḥatan li-l-muttaqīn

And We sent °Isā son of Maryam following in their footsteps,
confirming the truth of what remained of the Torah;
and We gave him the °Injīl,
wherein there was guidance and light,
confirming the truth of what preceded it from the Torah,
and as a guidance and admonition to those who have taqwa.

(G-d-consciousness)

(Sūratu-l-Ma°idah 5:46)

&
إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ اذْكُرْ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَتِكَ
إِذْ أَبَدْتُكَ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ تَكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا
وَإِذْ عَلَّمْتُكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ

°idḥ qāla-llāhu yā °īsa-ibni maryama
°udḥkur ni°matī °alayka wa °alā wālidatika
°idḥ ayyadtuka bi-rūḥi-l-quḍusi
tukallimu-n-nāsa fi-l-mahdi wa kahlan

wa°idḥ °allamtuka-l-kitāba wa-l-ḥikmata wa-t-tawrāta wa-l-°injīla

Remember when Allāh will say, ‘Oh °Isā, son of Maryam,
remember My blessing to you and to your mother
when I strengthened you with the Purest Holy Spirit
(rūḥi-l-quḍūs)

so that you could speak to people in the cradle
and when you were fully grown;

and when I taught you the Book and Wisdom, the Torah and the °Injīl.

(Sūratu-l-Ma°idah 5:110)

And as with the corruption of the Torah so too with the ʾInjīl.

First of all we must remember that ʾĪsā ﷺ was a Palestinian Jew and his words must, perforce, have been the words of a Jew and no Jew is anything but a monotheist and so all ideas such as the Trinity, vicarious salavation, original sin etc. must be and are later day additions, distortions or just plain lies and corruption of what would have or could have been his words and teachings.

Here, for instance, is a fairly even handed examination of errors in the ʾInjīl which takes the view, for the most part, that they were simply innocent mistakes and errors of various scribes and copyists.

Errors Occurring during Dictation

Scribes would often make mistakes during the dictation of the texts by a reader. Words pronounced in the same way would cause problems too, e.g. in modern language was the scribe to write 'there' or 'their', 'whether' or 'weather'?

An example of the above can be found in the following two versions of verse 5 of the Book of Revelations:

King James Version:

“And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and **washed us** from our sins in his own blood.”

New Revised Standard Version:

“And from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has **freed us** from our sins by his blood.”

The difference of the above is highlighted in bold. In the King James version, which is based on The Textus Receptus¹², the Greek word is 'λουω' pronounced 'louo'.

While the New Revised Standard Version, which is based on earlier Greek manuscripts (Codex Sinaiticus¹, Codex Alexandrinus¹) has the word 'λυω' pronounced 'luo'.

The difference is very subtle, but still present, and it is likely that some scribes heard the former, while others heard the latter.

Modern Textual Critics such as Dr. Bruce M. Metzger, late of Princeton Theological Seminary, argue that the latter is more accurate as it is based on earlier and stronger manuscripts.

Mistakes by Copying

In Mark chapter 1 verse 40:

“And a leper came to him beseeching him, and kneeling, and said to him, ‘If you will, you can make me clean.’”.

The above is found in all present versions of the Bible. However, two early manuscripts:

Codex Vaticanus 15 and *Codex Bezae 16* omit the ‘kneeling’. This was probably due to the Greek word ‘and’ being found both before and after the word ‘Kneeling’, and so the scribe’s eyes may have jumped from one ‘and’ to the other omitting the word in between.

Scribal Corrections

Often, the Gospels make blatant errors, e.g. in Mark chap.1 verse 2-3:

“As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, ‘Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight...’”

The problem with the above verses is that the passages which are quoted are in fact a combination of Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3.

All present Bibles read as above, but some manuscripts, *Codex Alexandrinus* being one, have the text reading; ‘As it is written in the prophets’. The scribe who was writing it most likely picked up on the error explained above and sought to rectify it by replacing ‘Isaiah’ with ‘the Prophets’.

Another example is where a scribe thought to correct the language of the original, in the Gospel of Matthew:

“And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city. And behold, they brought to him a paralytic, lying on his bed; and when Jesus saw their faith he said to the paralytic, ‘Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven.’ Behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, ‘This man is blaspheming.’ But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, ‘Why do you think evil in your hearts?’” (Matt. 9:1-4)

The above translation is in all present Bibles. However, again in the *Codex Sinaiticus* and *Codex Bezae* verse 4 reads as: ‘Jesus, seeing their thoughts...’ Scribes of other manuscripts obviously thought that it would make far more sense that Jesus ‘knew’ their thoughts as opposed to ‘seeing’ their thoughts.

Intentional Doctrinal Corrections

The Corruption of the Bible is mainly about later scribes modifying the holy text to suit their own beliefs or beliefs of their Church. There are numerous examples such as the first verse of the Gospel of Mark, which reads:

“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, *the Son of God*.”

The last part of the verse ‘*Son of God*’ is present in the *Textus Receptus*, but is omitted by both the *Codex Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus*. The strength of these two authorities is immense and is enough to reject the authenticity of the last three words.

However, to prove it even further, whether the original Gospel of Mark contained the above phrase that Jesus was the son of god, the question asked is, why would the scribes omit the phrase? What was their reason? On the contrary they would want to reinforce the position that Jesus was the son of god, which leads scholars to think that the phrase was not originally there, but was added later. This would make far more sense than a scribe deleting the phrase later.

The above is just the addition of three words; however, in all present Bibles you will notice that the Gospel of Mark ends with Chapter 16, Verse 20. But it is accepted by a majority of scholars that verses 9-20 were not originally there, and officially the Gospel ended at verse 8:

“And they went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to any one, for they were afraid.”

Verses 9-20 are not present in the *Codex Sinaiticus* and *Codex Vaticanus* while they are retained by the *Textus Receptus*, *Codex Bezae* and *Codex Alexandrinus*.

It is generally held that the verses were added to the end of the Gospel of Mark to give it a proper ending similar to the other gospels. Whatever the reason, these verses were not written by Mark and were added much later in the 5th century.

Again the famous textual critic, Dr.Bart Ehrman of U.N.C., states:

‘...the writing style varies from what we find elsewhere in Mark; the transition between this passage and the one preceding it is hard to understand.’

Mary Magdalene is introduced in verse 9 as if she had not been mentioned yet, even though she is discussed in the preceding verses; there is another problem with the Greek that makes the transition end more awkwardly; and there are a large number of words and phrases in the passage that are not found elsewhere in Mark. Obviously, scribes thought that the ending was too abrupt. The women told no one? Then, did the disciples never learn of the resurrection? And did not Jesus himself ever appear to them? How could that be the ending! To resolve the problem, scribes simply added an ending.'

Another example of an entire passage added to the Gospels is the very famous story of the 'Woman caught in Adultery' found in the Gospel of John 7:52-8:11.

Here a woman (some interpret as Mary Magdalene) was caught committing adultery by the Jewish crowd. No mention is made of the man she was caught with. She alone is brought before Jesus to be condemned. However, Jesus forgives her and lets her go.

The *Codex Bezae* and *Textus Receptus* both contain the above story. While P6618, P7519, *Codex Sinaiticus*, *Alexandrinus* and *Vaticanus* all omit the entire passage. The story is not present in any pre-5th century manuscript. It may well have been an oral tradition which made its way into the text, but it is definitely not the words of the supposed author, John.

Again, Dr. Bart Erhman states:

'...its writing style is very different from what we find in the rest of John (including the stories immediately before and after); and it includes a large number of words and phrases that are otherwise alien to the Gospel...How then did it come to be added? There are numerous theories about that. Most scholars think that it was probably a well-known story circulating in the oral tradition about Jesus, which at some point was added in the margin of a manuscript. From there some scribe or other thought that the marginal note was meant to be part of the text and so inserted it immediately after the account ends in John 7:52.

As can be seen above, mistakes were very common in the transmission of the Bible. Some of the mistakes were honest and genuine; others were scribal corrections where later scribes sought to correct earlier scribes by second guessing what the text should or might have said.

But most worrying is that many alterations to the text were made for doctrinal reasons. Entire passages were added, words modified to suit the purpose of the later church, and all of this occurred whilst still being attributed to the original writers of the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. It is these types of modifications which are cause for concern and discredit the authenticity of the New Testament, thus making it impossible for many people to see it as a Holy Book written and preserved by G-d-inspired people.

The above account does not take into consideration the changes and corruption of the text which took place when some of the early students of ʿIsā ﷺ began to move out into the pagan worlds of the Mediterranean basin such as Egypt, Greece and Rome which had a long history of polytheism, and the changes which were made to pander to the people of those civilisations in order to convert them. Indeed the Church's attitude toward paganism and for pagan ideas is best summed up in Pope Gregory the Great's words to a missionary: "You must not interfere with any traditional belief or religious observance that can be harmonized with Christianity."

We do not even possess the Greek New Testament as it first existed and only have Rome's falsification of it. What we have is a mass of manuscripts, of which only about three hundred date from before A.D. 800. A mere thirty-four of these are older than A.D. 400, of which only four were at any time complete. All these differ, and all at one time or another had authority as the known text.

Br. Bart Ehrman's recent and thorough discussion of the New Testament text in *The Orthodox Corruption Of Scripture* leads him to conclude that, during the earliest period of its transmission, the New Testament "was in a state of flux" and "came to be more or less standardized in some regions by the fourth century, and subject to fairly rigid control (by comparison) only in the high Byzantine period" (*Corruption*, p. 28) (circa 330-555ce). He adds in a note that this is the view of a wide range of scholars. This is one of the best books you can read to introduce you to the unreliability of the New Testament due to the theological adulteration of it by Rome.

If you read Ehrman, you will find concerning the New Testament that "the text was regularly adjusted in such areas as the birth of Jesus, the agony in the garden, the institution of the Eucharist, Jesus's death, his cry of dereliction, resurrection and ascension..."

And these adjustments were made NOT by those who were labelled as heretics, but by the ‘proto-orthodox’, to use Dr. Ehrman’s term". Again, “Ehrman vividly shows how scribes have preserved or created within the manuscripts they were copying reflections of early Christological debates that helped to shape mainstream Christianity” (*Novum Testamentum*, [1994], pp. 405-06). In other words the New Testament was changed by Rome repeatedly in chronological succession as their Church Councils hammered out the Roman understanding of “the Christ” over the centuries. (For more on this see my bayān, “*Jesus or ‘Īsā* ﷺ.”

The canon of the New Testament is the set of books most Christians regard as divinely inspired and constituting the New Testament of the Christian Bible. For most, it is an agreed-upon list of twenty-seven books that includes the Canonical Gospels, Acts, Letters (Epistles) of the Apostles, and Revelation. The books of the canon of the New Testament were written mostly in the first century and finished by the year 150 AD. For the Orthodox, the recognition of these writings as authoritative was formalized in the Second Council of Trullan of 692, although it was nearly universally accepted in the mid 300’s. The Biblical canon was the result of debate and research, reaching its final term for Catholics at the dogmatic definition of the Council of Trent in the 16th Century, when the Old Testament Canon was finalized in the Catholic Church.

Writings attributed to the Apostles circulated among the earliest Christian communities. The Pauline epistles were circulating, perhaps in collected forms, by the end of the 1st century AD. Justin Martyr, in the mid 2nd century, mentions “memoirs of the apostles” as being read on the Sabbath alongside the “writings of the prophets”. A four gospel canon (the *Tetramorph*) was asserted by Irenaeus, c. 180, who refers to it directly.

By the early 200s, Origen may have been using the same twenty-seven books as in the Catholic New Testament canon, though there were still disputes over the canonicity of the Letter to the Hebrews, James, II Peter, II and III John, and Revelation, known as the *Antilegomena*. Likewise, the Muratorian fragment is evidence that, perhaps as early as 200, there existed a set of Christian writings somewhat similar to the twenty-seven-book NT canon, which included four gospels and argued against objections to them.

Thus, while there was a good measure of debate in the Early Church over the New Testament canon, the major writings are claimed to have been accepted by almost all Christians only by the middle of the 3rd century – that is *three centuries* after the death of Jesus.

In his Easter letter of 367, Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, gave a list of the books that would become the twenty-seven-book NT canon, and he used the word “canonized” (*kanonizomena*) in regards to them. The first council that accepted the present canon of the New Testament may have been the Synod of Hippo Regius in North Africa (AD 393); the acts of this council, however, are lost. A brief summary of the acts was read at and accepted by the Councils of Carthage in 397 and 419. These councils were under the authority of St. Augustine, who regarded the canon as already closed. Pope Damasus I’s Council of Rome in 382, if the *Decretum Gelasianum* is correctly associated with it, issued a biblical canon identical to that mentioned above, or, if not, the list is at least a 6th-century compilation. Likewise, Damasus’ commissioning of the Latin Vulgate edition of the Bible, c. 383, was instrumental in the fixation of the canon in the West. In c. 405, Pope Innocent I sent a list of the sacred books to a Gallic bishop, Exsuperius of Toulouse. Christian scholars assert that, when these bishops and councils spoke on the matter, however, they were not defining something new but instead “were ratifying what had already become the mind of the Church.”

Some claim that, from the 4th century unanimity existed in the West concerning the New Testament canon. By the 5th century, the Eastern Church, with a few exceptions, came to accept the Book of Revelation and had come into harmony on the matter of the canon.

Please bear in mind that Muḥammad (محمد) The Prophet of Allāh ﷺ was born in in the year 570 of the Common Era and his prophetic mission began in roughly 610 CE and perhaps, given the above, you will understand a further necessity for his birth.

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَكَفَىٰ لِلنَّاسِ شَهِيدًا

huwa alladhī ʾarsala rasūlahu bi-l-hudā wa dīni-l-ḥaqqi
li-yuḍḥhirahu ʿala-d-dīni kullih; wa kafā bi-llāhi shahīdā

He sent His Messenger with the Guidance and the *Dīn* of Truth to exalt it over every other dīn and Allāh suffices as a witness.

(Sūratu-l-Faṭḥ 48:28)

Then ask yourself how, or perhaps better, why, did these verses come to be in the New Testament. (Matthew 16:13-17)

13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of *Man*, am?

14 And they said, Some say that you are John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

15 He said to them, But whom do you say that I am?

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

17 And Jesus answered and said to him, Blessed are you oh Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but my Father who is in heaven.

and then ask who exactly for a Jew is, “my *Father* who is in heaven”
and what Jew could agree to the statement that he was,
“the Son of the living God.”

This in the very essence of the distortion which led to Allāh ﷻ sending Muḥammad ﷺ with the Message of the Qurʾān and guaranteeing it will never be fabricated or changed. As Allāh ﷻ says,

إِنَّا خِزْنُ لَنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَمُحَافِظُونَ

ʾinnā naḥnu nazzalna-dh-dhikra wa ʾinnā lahu laḥāfiḍhūn

“Truly, I revealed the Dhikr and surely I will preserve it.”

(Sūratu-l-Hijr 15:9)



Ibn ʿAbbās ؓ and others said: “Allāh sent down the Qurʾān at one time from the Protected Tablet (*al-Lawḥu-l-Maḥfūdh*/اللوحة المحفوظة) to Baytu-l-ʿIzzah (البيت العزة) or The House of Honor or Power in the in the first heaven, then it was revealed to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ in stages over the next twenty-three years.” (*Tafsīr* Ibn Kathīr, 4/529). Allāh ﷻ described the Night in which it was revealed as being better than a thousand months, as He ﷻ said:

لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ

laylatu-l-qadri khayrun min ʾalfi shahr

“The night of al-Qadr is better than a thousand months”

(Sūratu-l-Qadr 97:3)

Allāh ﷻ also described that Night as being blessed, The night on which this descent took place is called “Laylatu-l-Qaḍr” (The Night of the Decree or Power), one of the odd-numbered nights in the last ten days of the month of Ramaḍān. as He ﷻ said:

ح • وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ • إِذَا نَزَّلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنذِرِينَ

ḥa mīm • wa-l-kitābi-lmubīn •

ʿinnā anzalnāhu fī laylatin mubārakatin ʿinnā kunnā muñḍhirīn
Hā Mīm. By the Clear Book. Truly, I revealed it in a blessed night.

(Sūratu-l-Dukḥān 44:1-3)

On this night, the angels and The Holy Spirit (*ar-rūḥu-l-quddus*/ الروح القدس) descend, which is to say that both the Holy Spirit and many angels descend on this night because it is so blessed, and the angels come down with the blessing and mercy of Allāh ﷻ, (just as they come down when Qurʾān is recited, and they surround the circles of dhikr, the gatherings where Allāh ﷻ is remembered), and they beat their wings for the one who sincerely seeks knowledge, out of respect for him.” (*Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, 4/531).

The Holy Spirit is Jibrīl ﷺ, who is specifically mentioned in this manner as a sign of respect for him.

This night is described as peace and safe, because the Shayṭān cannot do any evil or cause any harm on this night, as Mujāhid said. (*Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, 4/531). On this night, many people are saved from punishment because of what they do to worship Allāh ﷻ.

Even after the Prophet ﷺ there continues to be the night of Qaḍr as it is clearly stated in the Sūratu-l-Qaḍr and Sūratu-l-Dukḥān that the night of Qaḍr occurs every year.

Rashīdu-l-Dīn Maybudi, a famous “Some have said that the night of Qaḍr was for the time of Prophet and ended after him. However, this is not true, since all companions of the Prophet and all Muslim scholars believe that the night of Qaḍr will exist till the day of resurrection.

Shaykh Tabarsī has mentioned a narration from Abu Dharr Ghaffrī ﷺ as follows: “I asked the messenger of Allāh: O Prophet! Does the night of Qaḍr and the descent of the angels therein happen only at the time of Prophets and ends after they are gone?

The Prophet ﷺ said: “No, rather it continues until the Day of Judgement.” (Yawmu-l-Qiyāmah/يوم القيامة)

فِيهَا يُفْرَقُ كُلُّ أَمْرٍ حَكِيمٍ

fiḥā yufraqū kullu °amrin ḥakīm

In it every wise command is made clear.

(Sūratu-l-Dukḥān 44:4)

In that night the affairs of that year are dispatched from the Protected Tablet (*al-Lawḥu-l-Mahfudḥ*/اللوح المحفوظ) to the angels who record the decrees: who will live, who will die, what provision people will be given, what will happen until the end of that year, every matter of ordainment is decreed, and it cannot be altered or changed. (*Tafsīr* Ibn Kathīr, 4/531 4/137, 138). All of this is already known to Allāh ﷻ before it is even written down, but “He ﷻ makes known to the angels what is to happen, and orders them to do whatever they are ordered to do.” (*Sharḥ Saḥīḥ Muslim* an-Nawawī, 8/57)

إِذَا أَنْزَلْنَا فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ

°inna °anzalnahu fī laylati-l-qadri

“Truly, I revealed it on the Night of Power.”

(Sūratu-l-Qaḍr 97:1)

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ

shahru ramadāna alladhī °unzila fīhi-l-qur°ānu

hudan li-n-nāsi wa bayyinātin mina-l-huda wa-l-furqān

“The month of Ramaḍān in which I revealed the Qur°ān as [the means of] guidance and discernment to mankind ...”

(Sūrau-l-Baqarah 2:185)

These verses of course refer to the initial revelation because it is a known fact that the whole Qur°ān was not revealed to Muḥammad ﷺ on a single night in Ramaḍān. Ibn °Abbās ؓ stated that the Qur°ān was first separated from its station in the upper heavens and placed in The House of Honor (*Baytu-l-°Izzah*/البيت العزة) in the lowest heaven. One version states that this took place on the Night of Decree in Ramaḍān. Had it been the wish of Allāh ﷻ, the Qur°ān could have been revealed as a whole in a single revelation.

This was the method by which some of the earlier books of revelation were sent down. But, Allāh ﷻ, in the case of Muḥammad ﷺ, chose to divide the revelation into parts and reveal it over a time span of 23 years in Makkah and Madinah.

The first revelation within the heavens represented an announcement to the inhabitants of the heavens that the final book of revelation was now being sent down upon the last of the prophets.

From the lowest heaven sections of the Qurʾān were then taken down by the angel Jibrīl ﷺ to the Prophet ﷺ. This process of revelation continued over the twenty-three years of his prophethood. This revelation began with the first five verses of what would finally be known as Suratu-al-ʿAlaq.

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ • خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ • اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ
الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ • عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

ʿiqraʾ bi-ismi rabbika-l-ladhī khalaqa • khalaqa-l-ʾinsāna min ʿalaqa
• ʿiqraʾ wa rabbuka-l-ʾakram • alladhī ʿallama bi-l-qalam •
ʿallama-l-insāna mā lam yaʿlam •

Recite in the Name of your Sustainer who created,
– created people from clay –

recite in the Name of your Most Noble Sustainer.

Who taught by the Pen — Taught the people what they knew not.

(Suratu-al-ʿAlaq 96:1-5)

These verses were revealed to the Prophet ﷺ while he was fasting during the month of Ramaḍān during a spiritual retreat in a cave (*ghār ḥirāʾ* غار حراء) near Makkah.

However, the first complete Sūrah to be revealed was the Opener or Sūraul-l-Fātiḥah also called *al-ʿAsās* (Foundation), *ʾUmmu-l-Kitāb* (Mother of the book), *ʾUmmu-l-Qurʾān* (Mother of the Qurʾān) for as al-Bukḥarī said in the beginning his *Tafsir* in his Ṣaḥīḥ: “It is named ʾUmmu-l-Qurʾān because it is the first chapter (even though fifth in order of Revelation) written in all Qurʾānic texts and all recitation in prayer commences with it.” at-Tabarī said that it was so named because the meaning of the entire Qurʾān is summarised in it. The Arabs name anything that concisely summarises something as *ʾUmm*, or Mother. It is also called the *Sabʿan mina-l-Mathānī* (7 oft repeated verses), *ash-Shifāʾ* (the Healing), *ar-Ruqya* (the Remedy) and *al-Ḥamd* (The Praise) of which the Prophet ﷺ said, “By Him in whose Power my soul is, nothing like it has been revealed in the Torah, the Gospel, the Psalms, or the Qurʾān and it is seven oft-repeated verses in the Mighty Qurʾān which I have been given.”

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
 الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ
 إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ
 اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ
 صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ
 bismi-llāhi-r-raḥmāni-r-raḥīm
 al-ḥamdu-li-llāhi rabbi-l-°alamīn
 ar-raḥmāni-r-raḥīm māliki yawmi-d-dīn
 °iyyāka na°abudu wa °iyyāka nasta°in
 °ihdinaṣ-ṣirāṭa-l-mustaqīm
 ṣirāṭa-l-ladḥīna °an°amta °alayhim ḡairi-l-magḥḍūbi °alayhim
 wa lā dāāalīn

In the name of Allāh,
 the Universally Merciful, the Singularly Compassionate.
 Praise be to Allāh, Sustainer of all the worlds.
 the Universally Merciful, the Singularly Compassionate
 Master of the Day of Judgement.
 You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help.
 Guide us [to] the straight way,
 the way of those whom you have blessed;
 not [the way of] those on whom is Your Anger
 nor of those who are astray.



“Sūratu-l-Fātiḥah” (*The Opener*/سورة الفاتحة) is a sūrah in which we discover numerous examples of numerical phenomena; in this case centered around the number seven.

And this is not strange, for in the Qur°ān, Allāh ﷻ has called this Sūrah: *Sab°an mina-l-Mathānī* (سَبْعًا مِنَ الْمَثَانِي) or the Seven oft repeated verses (We have given you the seven oft repeated verses (meaning Sūratu-l-Fātiḥah) and the Sublime Qur°ān (*wa-l-qur°ana-l-adḥīm*/وَالْقُرْآنَ الْعَظِيمَ). (Sūratu-l-Hijr 15:87)

The saying of Allāh ﷻ: ‘*al-ḥamdu-li-llāhi*’ (Praise to Allāh) has eight different letters, the number of the gates of Paradise is also eight, therefore the one who recites these eight letters out of purity of heart deserves the opening of the eight gates of Paradise.

We know from the ḥadīth that there are eight gates to the Garden, and in the station (*maqām*) you reach after reciting: I take refuge in Allāh from the Shayṭān (‘*a^oudḥu bi-illāh...*’) one gate of the eight gates of Paradise opens for you, that is the gate of Divine Gnosis (*al-ma^orifah*/المعرفة) or the intuitive knowledge of spiritual truth.

The second gate is that of Remembrance or Invocation (*adh-Dhikr*/الذكر) as you are reciting ‘*bismi-llāhi-r-raḥmāni-r-raḥīm*’.

The third gate is that of Gratitude and Sincere Thankfulness (*ash-Shukr*/الشكر) after reciting ‘*al-ḥamdu-li-llāhi rabbi-l-^oalamīn*’.

The fourth gate is that of Hope (*ar-rajā^o*/رجاء) when you recite ‘*ar-raḥmāni-r-raḥīm*’.

The fifth gate is that of Fear (*al-khawf*/الخوف) when you recite ‘*māliki yawmi-d-dīn*’.

The sixth gate is that of Purity (*aṭ-ṭahārah*/الطهارة) born out of the Divine Gnosis or *al-ma^orifah* of Servitude (*al-^oubudīah*/العبودية) and Divinity (*ar-rubūbiyah*/الربوبية) in your reciting ‘*‘iyyāka na^oabudu wa ‘iyyāka nasta‘īn*’.

The seventh gate is that of Invocation (*ad-du^oā^o*/الدعاء) in your reciting ‘*‘ihdinaṣ-ṣirāṭa-l-mustaqīm*’.

The eighth gate is that of Emulation (*al-^oi^otiqād*/الاعتقاد) or following the example of the good and pure souls, and of seeking guidance through their Divine Light (*an-nūr*/النور) and that is in your reciting of ‘*ṣirāṭa-l-ladhīna ‘an^oamta ‘alayhim...*’

These are some of the secrets of al-Fātiḥah and the Gates of Paradise and what is referred to in:

جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ مِّنْ فَتْحَتِ لَهَا الأبوابُ

jannāti ‘adnin mufattaḥatan lahumu-l-abwābā
gardens of perpetual bliss, with gates wide-open to them,

(Sūrah Ṣāwd 38:50)

For the Gardens of Divine Gnosis (*al-ma^orifah*) have been opened by these spiritual keys, which shows what can happen during the Ritual Prayer (*aṣ-ṣalāt*/الصلاة) of Spiritual Ascension (*al-mirāj*/المعراج) like that of the Prophet ﷺ to the Seven Gardens of the Heavens.

To sum up what has just been said: according to the statements of Allāh ﷻ in His Book, there are two distinct revelations of the Qurʾān which took place. It is important that these two revelations be understood in order to clear up any apparent contradictions in the various terms used in Qurʾān and Sunnah to describe the revelation of Qurʾān, which is what we have tried to do.

On one hand, the Qurʾān is referred to as having been revealed in its totality in Ramaḍān or on Laylatu-l-Qadr, the Night of Decree; while on the other hand, it is referred to as having been continuously revealed in segments up until just before the death of the Prophet ﷺ.

I want next to clarify the Preservation of the Qurʾān, in contradistinction to the fate of Torah and ʾInjīl, going forward in time.

Allāh ﷻ promised in the Qurʾān that He Himself would take on the responsibility of protecting His final word from loss or corruption.

إِنَّا خَزْنُ لَنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَمُحَافِظُونَ

ʾinnā naḥnu nazzalna-dh-dhikra wa ʾinnā lahu laḥāʿ-ḍḥūn

“Truly We have revealed the Reminder,
and truly I shall certainly preserve it.”

(Sūratu-l-Ḥijr 15:9)

The Qurʾān has thus been preserved in both its oral and written form in a way no other religious book in history has.

Whilst we cannot truly know the answer without protectively saying *Allāhu ʿalim* (Allāh alone knows), we must ask: Why did Allāh ﷻ preserve the Qurʾān and permit the earlier books of divine revelation, as we have seen, to be changed, corrupted or lost?

A possible answer to that question rests on the following three considerations or, even, facts:

The earlier Prophets ﷺ and their Books were sent to particular people in particular periods of history. Once the period ended, a new Prophet ﷺ was sent with a new book to replace or add on to the previous revelation. So, it was not necessary that these books be preserved by Allāh ﷻ, for they were continually being updated over time. The preservation of the earlier books was left to the people as a test for them. Thus, when the people to whom the Messages were addressed went astray, they changed what was written in the books which their Prophets ﷺ brought in order to make allowable to them things which were forbidden. In that way, all of the earlier books of revelation became either changed or lost as we have already shown.

Muḥammad ﷺ Seal of the Prophets ﷺ

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was the last prophet whom Allāh ﷻ sent and was not sent either to a particular people or a particular time. He was sent to all people until the end of the world. Allāh ﷻ says,

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا كَافَّةً لِّلنَّاسِ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

wa mā ʾarsalnāka ʾillā kāffatan-li-n-nāsi bashīran wa nadhīran
wa lākinna ʾakthara-n-nāsi lā yaʿlamūn

“I have only sent you [Muḥammad] as a giver of good news and a warner to all people, but most people do not understand.”

(Sūrah Sabā° 34:28)

Thus, his ﷺ particular book, the Qurʾān, had to be specially preserved from any form of change or loss so that it would be available to all the generations of people until the very last day of the world.

The Qurʾān was the main miracle given to Muḥammad ﷺ to prove that he was a true prophet of Allāh ﷻ and not an imposter, and the proof is with us in the present as the Qurʾān remains as it was.

The Qurʾān had to be preserved intact as it was to prove to the later generations that Muḥammad ﷺ really was the last prophet of Allāh ﷻ. All of the false prophets who have announced themselves after the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ have brought books which they claimed to be from Allāh ﷻ or G-d or whoever, but none of them have spread to the four corners of the world and to all of it peoples nor have the miraculous ability to be memorized by millions, nor have they improved on or furthered the message of the Qurʾān.

The significance of the preservation of Qurʾān is that ʾIslām has itself been kept in its original purity because of it. People can always return to the source of ʾIslām no matter what people may have assumed or forgotten in time. All of the essential principles of ʾIslām are to be found in the Qurʾān. Consequently, the preservation of the Qurʾān is also functionally the preservation of ʾIslām as it is and was. The loss of the complete and unaltered Gospel (ʾInjīl) of ʾĪsā ﷺ means that Christians can never return to, or even find, the true teachings of ʾĪsā ﷺ except by accepting ʾIslām. Similarly, the original Torah, as we have shown, was lost when the first Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians. Thus, the Jews cannot return to the pure teachings of Prophet Mūsā ﷺ except by following ʾIslām. It is only in ʾIslām that the pure teachings of the prophets have been preserved without any change, addition, subtraction or alteration which is, perhaps, why Allāh ﷻ says in the Qurʾān,

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ
إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَعِيَانِيَهُمْ

°inna-d-dīna °inda-llāhi-l-°islāmu

wa mā °ikhtalafa-l-ladhīna °ūtu-l-kitāba

°illā mim-ba°di mā jā°ahumu-l-°ilmu bagħyan baynahum

Truly religion with Allāh (is) Surrender (to His Will and Guidance).

[al-°Islām]

Those who received the Book in the past
differed only after knowledge came to them, and they fell into dispute
and become divided through mutual envy and ill intention.

(Sūrah °Al °Īmrān 3:19)



The Qur°ān in Itself

The word “Qur°ān” is a verbal noun derived from the verb “qara°a” (قرأ) which means, to read, to recite, to chant or cantillate is equivalent in meaning to “qira°ah” meaning “a liturgical reading or recital.” However, the term “Qur°ān” is also historically used specifically to refer to the book which was revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. As such the term “Qur°ān” is mentioned in nearly 70 places throughout the Qur°ān in reference to itself. For example:

إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَهْدِي لِلَّتِي هِيَ أَقْوَمُ
وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَبِيرًا

°inna hadḥa-l-qur°āna yahdī li-l-latī hiya °aqāwamu

wa yubashshiru-l-mu°minīna-l-ladhīna ya°malūna-ṣ-ṣaliḥāti

°anna lahum °ajāran kabīrā

Truly, this Qur°ān shows the way to all that is most upright,
and gives the believers who do good deeds the good news
that theirs will be a great reward.

(Sūratu-l-°Isrā 17:9)

The term “qira°ah” also has closely related synonyms that are employed throughout the Qur°ān. Each synonym possesses its own distinct meaning, but its use may converge with that of Qur°ān in certain contexts. Such terms include *kitāb* (book); *°āyah* (sign); and *sūrah* (chapter). The latter two terms also denote units of revelation.

In the large majority of contexts, usually with a definite article (*al-*), the synonym is referred to is the “revelation” (*waḥy*), that which has been “sent down” (*tanzīl*) at intervals. Other related words are: *dhikr*, meaning ‘remembrance’, used to refer to the Qurʾān in the sense of a reminder and warning; and *ḥikmah*, meaning ‘wisdom’, sometimes referring to the revelation or part of it.

Allāh ﷻ describes the Qurʾān as “the discernment or the criterion between truth and falsehood” (*al-furqān*), “the mother of the book” (*umm-l-kitāb*), “guide” (*hudā*), “wisdom” (*ḥikmah*), “remembrance” (*dhikr*), and “revelation” (*tanzīl*) meaning something sent down, signifying the descent of an object from a higher place to lower place. Another term is *al-kitāb* (‘the book’), though it is also used in the Arabic language for other scriptures, such as the Torah and the Gospels (ʾInjīl). The term *muṣḥaf* (‘written work’) is often used to refer to particular Qurʾānic manuscripts but is also used in the Qurʾān to identify earlier revealed books.

The name Qurʾān itself is used to refer to both the Qurʾān as a whole, as in the previously quoted verse; as well as to each verse or group of verses, as in the following verse:

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

wa ʾidḥa qurīʾa-l-qurʾānu fa-s-tamiʿū laḥu

wa ʾanṣitū laʿallakum turḥamūn

And if the Qurʾān is recited, you should listen to it
and be silent, that you may be graced by mercy.

(Sūratu-l-Aʿrāf 7:204)

The Qurʾān has also widely been referred to by other names (as above); for example, the Furqān (That which divides the true from the false/الفرقان):

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْفُرْقَانَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ لِيَكُونَ لِلْعَالَمِينَ نَذِيرًا

tabāraka-l-ladhī nazzala-l-furqāna ʿalā ʿabdihi

li-yakūna li-l-ʿālamīna nadḥīrā

Blessed is He who revealed the Furqān to His worshipper (ʿabd)
in order that he may be a warner to all the worlds.

(Sūratu-l-Furqān 25:1)

As we mentioned the Qurʾān is also widely referred to as the Reminder of the Remembrance (adh-dhikr/الذِّكْرُ)

Muḥammad ﷺ Seal of the Prophets ﷺ

إِنَّا خَزَنَ لَنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَمُحَافِظُونَ

°innā naḥnu nazzalna-dh-dhikra wa °innā lahu laḥā°ḍhūn

“Truly We have revealed the Reminder,
and truly I shall certainly preserve it.”

(Sūratu-l-Hijr 15:9)

إِن عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ

°inna °alaynā jam°ahū wa qur°ānah

truly it is for Us to gather it [in your heart,] and to cause it to be read
(Sūrau-l-Qiyamah 75:17)

The Qur°ān existed in scattered written forms during the life of the Prophet ﷺ and it existed in its oral entirety at the time of the Prophet’s death based on the two recitals of Jibril ﷺ in the year of the death of the Prophet ﷺ in the year 632 CE.

The first Kḫalifah, Abu Bakr ﷺ decided to collect as a book in one volume under the collaboration of a group of scribes, most importantly Zayd ibn Ṭḥabit ﷺ and °Alī ﷺ who collected the verses and produced several hand-written copies of the complete book from parchments, palm-leaf stalks, thin stones and from men who knew it by heart. Hafsa bint °Umar ﷺ, a widow of the Prophet ﷺ and the second Kḫalifah Umar bin Kḫattab’s ﷺ daughter, was entrusted with that complete text. In about 650 CE, when the third Kḫalifah °Uṭḥmān ibn °Affān ﷺ as °Islām expanded beyond the Arabian peninsula into Persia, the Levant and North Africa began noticing slight differences in pronunciation of the Qur°ān and , and, in order to preserve the text, ordered a committee to use the text of Hafsa ﷺ and prepare a standard copy of the text of Qur°ān. Thus, within twenty years of the death of the Prophet ﷺ, the Qur°ān existed in a standard agreed upon written form which became the model from which copies were made and distributed to the urban capitals of the Muslim world. All other versions were ordered destroyed to prevent confusion. The present form of the text is universally accepted by all Muslims to be the original version as it was revealed by Jibril ﷺ.

According to Shi°as and some Sunni scholars, °Alī ﷺ compiled a complete version of the Qur°ān immediately after Muhammad’s death which differed from the °Uṭḥmānic codex only in that the version he collected was in chronological order and had extensive marginal notes he had made which might have proved confusing.

Despite this, °Alī ؑ made no objection against the standardized Qur°ān, but kept his own book tho in other versions that copy was burned by Abu Bakr ؓ in order not to confuse people. Other personal copies of the Qur°ān may have existed including the codices of ibn Maṣūḍ ؓ and Ubayy ibn K°ab ؓ, none of which exist today

I apologise here to the more knowledgeable listeners or readers and seek their indulgence but in my long years as a teacher of Qur°ān and Qur°ānic subjects I have found that many people, especially among the youth, but also their more modern and secularised parents, are not all that familiar with many details surrounding the Qur°ān and we cannot really speak or write about the Seal of the Prophets ﷺ unless we know what it is that sealed Prophecy and that *is* the Qur°ān as well as what Prophecy is.

خَنَامُهُ مِسْكٌ وَفِي ذَلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنَافِسُونَ

kḥitāmuhu miskun wā fī dhālika falyatanāfasi-l-mutanā°sūn
whose seal is musk – for this let (all) those strive who strive for bliss
(Sūratu-l-Mutafifin 83:226)



Another very important thing to know in speaking about the written Qur°an (*qūrān tadwini*) is that it was originally an oral text because the Prophet ﷺ was unlettered, uneducated or °ummi (الأمي)

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْنُوبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ
وَالْإِنْجِيلِ يَأْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ...
فَأَمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْأُمِّيِّ الَّذِي يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَكَلِمَاتِهِ

alladhīna yattabi°ūna-r-rasūla-n-nabiyya-l-°ummiyya-l-ladhī yajidū-
nahu maktūban °indahum fi-t-tawrāti wa-l-°injīli
ya°muruhum bi-l-ma°ūfi wa yanhāhum °ani-l-munkar...
fa °āminū bi-llāhi wa rasūlihi-n-nabiyyi-l-°ummiyyi-l-ladhī
yu°minu bi-llāhi wa kalimātihi

Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet,
whom they find mentioned in their own [Scriptures], –
in the Torah and the °Injīl . . .

so believe in Allāh and his Messenger, the unlettered Prophet,
who believes in Allāh and His words.

(Sūratu-l-A°raf 7:157 & 158)

Those who interpret ^ʿ*ummi* (الأمي) to mean illiterate appear to be forcing a meaning onto the word which it does not readily yield. It is obviously important that we should know what the conception of Muḥammad ﷺ of his prophetic role was and the best way to do this is to seek the best interpretation that can be gained from a study of the expression in its context rather than by reading a preconceived, preferent meaning into it. The word comes from the same root letters as ^ʿ*ummah* (أمة), a very common word in Qurʾān meaning a people, community or nation. Arberry, a non Muslim English translator, significantly translates the whole expression “an-nabiyyal-^ʿ*ummi*” (النبي الأمي) as “the Prophet of the common folk”. The word ^ʿ*ummah* never simply means an illiterate community and, indeed, it can also mean an uneducated community and it appears to carry this meaning on one or two occasions in the Qurʾān. Thus the interpretation of the word ^ʿ*ummi* to mean to simply mean “illiterate” stretches its meaning too far and that without reference to its context.

Medieval Muslim commentators such as al-Tabarī held that the term gave two meanings: first, the inability to read or write in general and second, the inexperience or ignorance of previous books or scriptures. However they gave priority to the first meaning. Besides the illiteracy of the Prophet ﷺ was taken as a sign of the genuineness of his prophethood. For example, according to ar-Razi, if the Prophet ﷺ had mastered writing and reading he would have been suspected of having studied the books of those who came before.

It is by no means certain, given the many years he ﷺ worked the caravan routes, that the Prophet ﷺ was illiterate, but rather it makes more sense to say he was *uneducated*. It does, however, seem certain that he ﷺ neither recited nor transcribed any book beforehand, thus providing substantial evidence that the Qurʾān was revealed to him from by Allāh ﷻ and Angel Jibrīl ﷺ and did not come from human means or intervention, though he may have heard in his travels portions of the Torah or ^ʿInjīl commonly recited by Christian or Jewish folk tale tellers (*kāhinin*/كاهن), but given the clarity, precision and context of such material referring to earlier scriptures that appears in the Qurʾān it does not seem at all likely that what has come down to us is a rehash of such popular folk tales as he is likely to have heard at caravan rest stops and in the public markets of his ﷺ time. Throughout the Qurʾān, Jews and Christians collectively are called ^ʿ*Ahla-l-Kitāb* (أهل الكتاب) meaning “People of the *Book*”.

Even a brief study of the contrasts drawn in the Qurʾān between this group and the ʿummiyyun, or the “unscriptured people”, shows that the ʿummi prophet means that the Prophet ﷺ was to be the *prophet of the people without a scripture*, that is, one raised from among them to give them a book containing sound religious directives.

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ
وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

huwa alladhī baʿatha fi-l-ʿummiyyīna rasūlan miñhum
yatlū ʿalayhim ʾāyātihi wa yuzakkīhim
wa yuʿallimuhumu-l-kitāba wa-l-ḥikmata
wa-ʾin kānū min qablu lafī ḍalālīn mubīn

It is He who raised up among the *unlettered* people
a Messenger from among them to recite His Signs to them
and purify them and teach them the Book and Wisdom,
even though before that they were clearly misguided.

(Sūratu-l-Jumuʿah 62:2)

Thus we see that an unlettered or ʿummi Messenger clearly means one drawn from a people, hitherto uneducated in divine revelation, to give them a scripture by which they might be purified of their ignorant ways and be instructed in divine wisdom. Indeed the times before the coming of ʾIslām among the Arabs are often referred to as *Jāhiliyyah* (جاهلية), that is times of ignorance not unlike Paul’s description of pre-Gospel times among the Gentiles (Acts 17.30).

Indeed Jaʿfar-aṣ-Ṣādiq ؑ reckons it was a special favor of Allāh ﷻ that the Prophet ﷺ was untaught by any man and unversed in any scripture, and says further that the Prophet ﷺ was raised up among a people, who, although they had letters, had no divine books or a widely operative alphabet and were therefore called ʿummi.

In short Allāh ﷻ sent down the message to the ʿummi Prophet ﷺ through the angel Jibrīl ؑ who taught him, as Allāh ﷻ says:

عَلَّمَ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى

ʿallamahu ṣhādīdu-l-quwā

Taught by one of mighty power.

(Sūratu-l-Najm 53:5)

At first the Prophet ﷺ used to repeat the everything Jibrīl ؑ told him aloud with his tongue so as not to forget it

Allāh ﷻ forbade him from doing so this in His ﷻ saying:

وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يُقْضَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهُ وَقُل رَّبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

wa lā ta°jal bi-l-qur°āni min qabli an yuqḏā °ilayka waḥyuhu
wa qul rabbi zidnī °ilmā

“Do not rush ahead with the Qur°ān
before its revelation to you is complete,
but say: “My Sustainer, increase me in knowledge.”

(Sūrah Ṭā Hā 20:114)

So Allāh ﷻ promised to preserve the Qur°ān in the very heart of the Prophet ﷺ, in such a manner that he could and would not forget.

لَا تُحَرِّكْ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهِ • إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ

lā tuḥarrik bihi lisānaka li-ta°jala bih
°inna °alaynā jam°ahu wa qur°ānah

Do not move your tongue trying to hasten it
it is for Us to gather it [in your heart,]
and to cause it to be read [as it ought to be read].

(Sūratu-l-Qiyamah 75:16-17)

Meaning that Allāh ﷻ will certainly preserve it in the heart of the Prophet ﷺ, and he will read it to the people without forgetting anything in it or of it. Next Allāh ﷻ says:

فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ آيَاتِنَا فَتَعْلَمْنَاهُ • ثَمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا يَأْنِي

fa-°idḥa qara°nāhu fa-°ttabi° qur°ānah
thumma °inna °alaynā bayānah

So when We recite it, follow its recitation [with all your mind]
and then, behold, it will be for Us to make its meaning clear.

(Sūratu-l-Qiyamah 75:18-19)

So Allāh ﷻ promised to preserve the Qur°ān in the heart of His Prophet ﷺ and to clarify to him ﷺ its meaning and further says,

سَنُقْرِئُكَ فَلَا تَنْسَىٰ

sanuqri°uka falā tansā

We shall make you recite (read) so that you will not forget,
(Sūratu-l-°A°la 87:6)

And if you might ask how was he able to read what was revealed in the cave of Hirā° the answer is, he was taught by Jibrīl ﷺ for an illiterate person who cannot read from books or write, is taught orally and *the words were inscribed in light on his heart.*



What then of the content of the Qurʾān?

Unlike the Torah, the Tanakh and the ʾInjīl the Qurʾān is not, with a few exceptions, a narrative though in the stories of Maryam ﷺ or Yusuf ﷺ or to some degree Mūsā ﷺ there are bits and pieces and passages of narrative dimension but they exist more along the lines of being used to make illustrative points and to shine the light on certain subjects by way of analogy, similitude and metaphor.

Rather the Qurʾān is more like a scintillating light box, and there are no doubt many reasons for this, but because of this scintillating and constantly shifting character those who are critics of the Qurʾān and the Prophet ﷺ often refer to it as a confused mish-mash and jumble of unconnected matters and material.

This is of course their own failure not that of the Qurʾān.

In many ways the Qurʾān is more “modern” than the most modern of experimental and experiential texts by avant garde writers.

Part of the reason that it appears this way is that, in a sense, all the stories have been told already and, as such, they were the grist for the many story tellers or *ḥākawāṭīh* (حافظة) who held forth around the camp fires and chai khanas of the Semitic world. The radio and television soap operas of their time.

Tales of the Prophets ﷺ were popular fare for both the *kāhinin* (كاهن) and the *ḥākawāṭīh* and it is for that reason I have said, that at least from my own understanding, the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ who was, by the description of Allāh ﷻ, *ʾummi*, whether you take that to mean illiterate or uneducated, was, or had to be, nevertheless cognizant of many of the stories or narratives of the Torah, the Tanakh and the ʾInjīl in whatever form they might have been. It was common fare and since Allāh ﷻ was also totally aware of that there was no need for the long narratives of who begat who begat who as the Arabs were known for their love of genealogical lore.

That of course is a reductive, worldly, and rather profane way of looking at it; not at all inspired or exalted, but possible at the lowest level. At a much more exalted level we can, perhaps, say that Allāh ﷻ sent all these scintillating lights connecting this to that and that to this and beyond because there was no longer need for narrative but there *was* need for the people of the time, who had all that story-telling background, to connect the dots and understand why things were and are the way they are and how they got to be that way.

Now there are some Sūrah's in the Qur'ān whose names have no known meaning. No one knows what *Tā Hā*, *Yā Sūn*, *Ṣawd*, *Qāf*, or *Nūn* mean. These are called *muqaṭṭa'āt* (مقطعات) and are unique letter combinations that appear in the beginning of 29 Sūrah's of the Qur'an. *Muqaṭṭa'āt* literally means abbreviated or shortened. Their meanings remain unclear and are considered by most Muslims to be divine secrets. They are also known as *fawātih* (فواتح) or 'openers' as they also form the opening verse of their respective suras.

On the other hand, the meanings of the names of the rest of the chapters are understood and familiar although there are very strange names linked to a mythical episode. It should be noted that some of the Qur'ānic *Suwār* (pl. of *ṣurah*) carry the names of insects or animals such as the chapters of the Cow, Ants, Spider, Elephant, Bee and the Cattle. We also find in the Qur'ān chapters entitled, 'The Afternoon', or 'The Dawn', or 'The Night', or 'The Morning'.

Each word in the Qur'ān may have multi-level meaning with multi-dimensional significance and may have been chosen by Allāh ﷻ for multiple purposes. These unique aspects of the Qur'ān allow, for example, an ordinary Muslim to understand the meaning correctly of a word or verse, but only at one level of depth, while another Muslim may be able to capture a different meaning or significance at another level of depth or many levels of meaning. Both could be correct in their understanding. For this reason a Muslim sees or reads every word and verse in the Qur'ān as a unique saying of Al-lāh ﷻ so that each person who views it (or reads it) may come to a different conclusion regarding the exact message or meaning intended by Allāh ﷻ through that word or verse (*'āyat*). For instance a Muslim astronomer, who is also expert in Arabic, may be able to infer information of significance to the field of astronomy when reading a verse that an ordinary Muslim doesn't or can't or a Doctor may see something in a verse that a lay person may not or or or.

Beyond that there are so many stories involving prophets of all times and kings and pharaohs and generals and husbands and wives and just plain folk and there is a unique story hidden in all of them.

At the same time there are all kinds of scientific dimensions since in the Qur'ān we have a book which claims its Author was present at the beginning of the universe, at the beginning of life. So, we have a right to address that Author and say, "So tell me something that proves that You were there when the world began; when life began."

Allāh ﷻ says,

أَوَلَمْ يَرِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ كَانَتْ رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنَاهُمَا
وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ أَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

°awa lam yara-lladhjīnā kafarū °anna-s-samāwāti wa-l-arḍa
kānata ratqan fafataqānāhuma

wa ja°alna mina-l-mā°i kulla shay°in ḥayyin afalā yu°minūn

Do not those who disbelieve know that the heavens and the earth
were of one piece [and] then We parted them,
and we made every living thing of water?

Will they not then believe?

(Sūratu-l-°Ambiyā° 21:30)

There are three key points here. First of all it is the disbelievers who are mentioned as being those who would see that the heavens and the earth were one piece and then parted and would see that all life came to be made from water.

The currently universally accepted theory of the origin of the universe is the Big Bang theory. It maintains that at one time all of the heavens and the earth were one piece, the ‘monoblock’ as it is called. At a particular point in time, this ‘monoblock’ split and it continues to expand yielding the universe we we now inhabit. This is a recent discovery, a recent confirmation.

The Nobel Prize in Physics was awarded only a few years back to those who confirmed the Big Bang origin of the universe. It was only about two hundred years ago that Leeuwnhoek and others perfected the microscope and discovered for the first time that living cells are composed of about eighty percent water.

Those Nobel Prize winners and the Dutchman who invented the microscope were not Muslims. And yet they confirmed the vital statement that at one time the universe was one piece and that all life is made from water, just as this verse says

أَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

afalā yu°minūn

Will they not then believe?

Is this not an answer to the question we stated when we asked the Author: “Tell me something that shows me You were present when the universe began; when life began?”

Or this:

وَالسَّمَاءَ بَنَيْنَاهَا بِأَيْدٍ وَإِنَّا لَمُوسِعُونَ

wa-s-samā'a banaynāhā bi-^ʾaydin wa-^ʾinnā lamūsi^ʿūn

and it is We who have built the universe with [Our creative] power;
and, truly, it is We who are steadily expanding it
(Sūratu-dh-Dhāriyāt 51:47)

The comments of Muslims over the centuries on this verse which speaks of the heavens doing exactly that are very interesting. The wisest among them had stated that the words are very clear, that the heavens are expanding, but they could not imagine how that could be so. But they were content to leave the words as they were, to say: “Allāh knows best” which is to say — *wa'llāhu ʿalim*

For example, there is a word in Arabic — *dhuhūr* (ظُهُور) — usually translated in contemporary Standard Arabic as ‘atom’. In classical Arabic it is the smallest item available at one time or that can be imagined such as an ant or a grain of dust or less.

Those who would outsmart Allāh ﷻ have insisted that, “well, the atom is not after all the smallest piece of matter because in this century it has been discovered that the atom is made of still smaller matter.” Is it then possible to outsmart Allāh ﷻ who chose to use this word? Well, in Surah Yunus there is a verse which speaks of items the size of *dharratin*, or, importantly, smaller.

وَمَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْ رَبِّكَ مِنْ مِثَالِ ذَرَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَلَا أَصْغَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ
وَلَا أَكْبَرَ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ

wa mā ya^ʿzubu ʿan rabbika mim-mithqali dharratin
fi-l-^ʾarḍi wa lā fi-s-samā-i wa

lā ^ʾasghara min dhālika wa lā ^ʾakbara ʿillā fī kitābin mubīn

Not even the smallest speck eludes your Lord,
either on earth or in heaven.

Nor is there anything smaller than that, or larger,
which is not in a Clear Book.

(Sūrah Yunus 10:61)

There is no possibility in this subject someone is going to say a new discovery has outdated the words of the Qurʾān on the issue of the size of matter or the ultimate particles. There is yet another verse which speaks of ‘*dhuhūr*’ as human seed or the sperm cell.

وَإِذَا أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِن بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ
أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا أَنَّا نَقُولُ مَا يُرْسِلُكُمْ بِهِ ۚ

wa-idḍ ʾakḥaṭḥa rabbuka min banī ʾādama
min ḍḥuhūrihim ḍḥurriyyatahum
wa ashḥadahum ʿala anfusihim alastu bi-rabbikum
qalū balā ṣḥahidnā

an taqūlū yawma-l-qiyaṃati ʾinnā kunna ʿan ḥaḍḥa ghāfilīn

And (remember) when your Sustainer
brought forth from the Children of Adam,
from their backbones, their seed,
and made them testify of themselves, (saying):

“Am I not your Lord?”

They said: “Yes, certainly. We witness it.

(That was) so you wouldn’t say at the Day of Resurrection:

“Truly we were unaware of this”.

(Sūratu-l-ʿArāf 7:122)

Speaking of outsmarting the author of the Qurʾān, the ʾIslāmic point of view is that when a person embraces ʾIslām, their past is forgiven from the very beginning. This has been the invitation to ʾIslām: come to ʾIslām and all is forgiven from the past.

But think about this. There is only one enemy of the Prophet ﷺ who is actually mentioned by name in the Qurʾān: his uncle Abu Lahab, who Allāh ﷻ condemns in a short Sūrah in punishment for his sins.

As it happens, the man himself was alive for many years after this revelation. At any time he only needed to go to the Muslims to announce his acceptance of ʾIslām and been forgiven. Yet the Sūrah remains and he remains condemned for ever.

By accepting ʾIslām he could have confused people simply by pointing out to them that if Allāh ﷻ has promised forgiveness of everything save polytheism (*shirk*/شِرْك), how could it be that the Qurʾān pronounced that he was not forgiven?

In any case Abu Lahab died without accepting ʾIslām.

Additionally Allāh ﷻ in the Qurʾān confidently predicted a number of things only a few years before they came to pass. The fall of the Persian Empire, for example, was predicted in spite of the fact that it had just enjoyed a major military victory.

The evidence was all to the contrary. But in the chapter entitled Rome (Sūrah ar-Rūm), the fall of the Persian Empire, who were recently victors over the Romans, was predicted.

When all the Muslims in the world could meet in one room because they were so few in number, the revelations were already discussing their future successes. In confidence, they were planning for the day when they would be in charge of the city (Makkah) where they were forced at that time to hide for their very lives.

Some people would like to find any number of amazing things in the Qurʾān. But an honest method in examining this book, looking for evidence of the Divine origin, is to take things at their value, to look for things that are clear and to look in those places where we are invited to look.

The invitation is to examine the evidence in these places. We are doing the sensible thing if we examine the words used to look for the doubted meaning and to find evidence of the Divine origin.

As someone wrote, “Each one of us is an expert on something. One does not have to have a degree in a particular subject to decide that now, ‘I can take my expertise to the Qurʾān and see what I can find.’ We all know something from our own experience and life.”

I heard a story, several years ago in Toronto, of a man who was given the Qurʾān to read. The man was a sailor who spent his life at sea. When he read a verse in the Qurʾān describing the wave on the ocean, ‘waves within waves and the darkness between,’ he was surprised because the description was just what he knew the situation to be. When he returned the Qurʾān to the man who gave it to him to read, he asked him (because he was completely ignorant of the origins of ʾIslām): “This Muḥammad, was he a sailor?” He was quite surprised to find out that the man spent his life in the desert. So he had to ask himself: “From where did he get this knowledge of what it looks like to be out on a stormy sea?”

Beyond all of the many strange things that connect with one another over centuries or are totally out of context but confirm truths that nobody could have known or would have known at the time of the revelation of the Qurʾān there are stories from and of the lives of the Prophets ﷺ that nobody except the proverbial fly on the wall could or would have ever known. For instance Maryam ʿāliha s-salām shaking the date palm tree or Sulayman ʿālihi s-salām holding up his army for the ants to pass or Yaqūb ʿālihi s-salām crying at smelling the shirt of Yūsuf ʿālihi s-salām.

Truly to read the Qurʾān is to be constantly amazed. Verses one read ten years ago suddenly take on such a meaning as to absolutely change one's life. Marvels and miracles. Truly an ever-changing scintillating kaleidoscopic box of lights.

And beyond all of that there is the absolutely clear exposition of the rules of life which work for all those who accept them, be they black or white, brown or yellow or red, from north or south, east or west or speak this language or that. Universal truth laid out in absolute clarity without prevarication of any sort or type.

Cleaniness, Prayer, Fasting, Charity, Pilgrimage, Peace or War, Life and Death, Forgiveness and Revenge, the End of Time and the Last Day, the Garden and the Fire. Every level of life and beyond.

All covered and clearly laid out. How to be and how not to be.

English speaking people marvel at Shakespeare or Chaucer or Milton or Blake as the Romans marvelled at Dante and Cicero or the Chinese at Lao Tzu or the Hindus at the Vedas but truly when one deeply confronts the Qurʾān there is no doubt of its profundity.

It is an extra-terrestrial artifact and nothing less. The only thing on earth from beyond the earth and outside the known universe.

And the fact that an odd Anglo-saxon European American “gets it” ought to be proof that you don't even have to be an Arab (who by the way are only about 12% of the world's Muslims) to “get it”!

Allāh ﷻ in the Qurʾān clearly promises to protect it from corruption. Indeed, Allāh ﷻ has protected the Qurʾān and indeed the Qurʾān has remained the same. Every verse that was revealed to the Prophet ﷺ by Jibrīl ﷺ is in the Qurʾān that is available today.

Allāh ﷻ states in the Qurʾān, in and by itself, is the most important miracle that the Prophet ﷺ has brought to humanity. Since the Prophet ﷺ was intended to be the last prophet and the Qurʾān was the final message, Allāh ﷻ s decided to give people a unique miracle that can be examined and experienced by not only people who lived at the time of the Prophet ﷺ, but for as much time as there will be and come to be.

That is why the Qurʾān in its original unchanged Arabic is a unique miracle. The only book in the world authored by Allāh ﷻ word by word, that is still available today in its original form is the miracle. People throughout time have wondered whether they can see Allāh ﷻ or something that can be attributed directly to Allāh ﷻ.

The Qurʾān is the answer. It is available today for all humans to experience how Allāh ﷻ is expressed in words. The Qurʾān is a book of knowledge in which every verse is a sign from Allāh ﷻ. Each word used in the Arabic Qurʾān was uniquely chosen by Allāh ﷻ for a purpose. You can not add or subtract a word to or from the Qurʾān, without the corruption becoming noticeable. Scholars have discovered hidden logic structures and mathematical codes directly implanted in the Qurʾān that give further signs of proof to its authenticity and help in protecting its integrity from corruption.

While all the prophets have their signs: Nūh ﷺ sailed through the flood, ʾIbrāhīm ﷺ survived the fire, Mūsā ﷺ overcame the magicians and the Pharaoh and opened the Red Sea and lead his people, the Muslims of their time, to freedom in the wilderness, ʿĪsā ﷺ healed the sick and raised the dead but one decisive sign and a singular miracle was given to the last of the Prophets, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullāh, and this is the Qurʾān. This one Sign is still with us exactly as it was revealed without being changed in one detail, “neither jot nor tittle” as the Bible says. Any Muslim who takes his religion seriously suffers no disadvantage to another Muslim who lived fourteen centuries ago or one who lives in lands far away.

Those people who kept company with the Prophet, the ʾaṣḥāb رضي الله عنهم, had access to no more of the necessary information than we have today. They had the Qurʾān. That was the sign for them. It is still a sign to us today, the same miracle.



The garden shall be brought near, for the People of Taqwah (God-consciousness), not far. This is what you are promised, for everyone who returns, who perseveres, who is in awe of the Compassionate in the Unseen and comes with a heart constantly seeking.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ • ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً

فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي • وَادْخُلِي جَنَّاتِي

yā ʾayuhā-n-nafsu-l-muṭʾamaʾinah •
 ʾirjiʿī ʾilā rabbika rāḍiyatan marḍiyyah •
 fadā khulī fī ʾibādī • wa-ʾadākhulī jannatī •

Oh you whose self is at peace.

Return to your Lord pleased and well pleasing.
 Enter with My worshippers – enter My Garden.

(Sūrah al-Fajr 89: 28-30)

ادْخُلُوْهَا بِسَلَامٍۭ ذٰلِكَ يَوْمُ الْخُلُوْدِ

°udkḥulūhā bi-salāmin dḥalika yawmu-kḥulūd

Enter it in peace. This is the Day of Timeless Eternity.

(Sūrah Qāf 50:34)

“In it is what they will and We have more. How many a generation before them who were mightier than they have We caused to perish? Seek then throughout the land, is there any refuge?”

اِنْ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَذِكْرٍۭ لِّمَنْ كَانَ لَمْۢ قَلْبٌۭ اَوْ اَلَّتِی السَّمْعُ وَهُوَ شَهِیْدٌۭ

°inna fī dḥalika ladḥikra liman kana lahu qalbun

°ow alqa-s-sam°a wa huwa ṣḥahidā

This is a reminder for anyone who has a heart,
or one who listens while witnessing.

(Sūrah Qāf 50:37)



The Qur°ān as the final revelation also includes many prescriptions for the spiritual life or what some refer to as °Islamic Spirituality. This is an aspect of °Islāmic thought and sensibility which has been attacked by the various *salafī takfirī* groups, both the Arab and South-east Asian varieties, as well as the more outwardly moderate groups with alphabet soup acronyms that are mainly politically motivated.

I have left my words of this subject to the end of this bayān because without this °Islāmic Spirituality or *tasawwuf* (تصوف) to give its correct name, the rest of what I have said, whilst valid, is incomplete.

It is true that the Qur°ān and the Sunnah are sufficient for any Muslim. However, at the same time it is also true that a teacher is required to master any subject. If the Qur°ān was sufficient, then Allāh ﷻ could have easily sent the book without a messenger. However, he sent the Prophet ﷺ as a model of the Qur°ān so that people could directly learn from his example. This then became the method of learning for each of the °Islāmic sciences. For example, each ḥadīth that °Imām Bukḥarī compiled in his collection of ḥadīth is directly linked to the Prophet ﷺ through a continuous chain of narrators. Thus, each person in the chain must have learned from someone and must be able to state who that person was. Similar requirements are present in other branches of °Islāmic science as well. The science of *tasawwuf* is no exception to this.

Further the Prophet ﷺ also made clear to us through numerous ḥadīth that he left behind him a *warith* (وارث) or inheritor capable of continuing the transmission of the message of the Qurʾān, though of course *not* continuing the Revelation (*waḥy*/وحي) which has been “sealed” by the Prophet ﷺ but rather explaining and developing it and, very importantly, passing the knowledge of this on to succeeding generations right up to the present and into the possible and conceivable future.

For most people involved in this subject of ʿIslāmīc Spirituality, the original inheritor is of course the cousin of the Prophet ﷺ, ʿImām ʿAlī ؑ in accord with two sayings of the Prophet ﷺ the first of which is “Whose master (*mawla*/مولى) I am ʿAlī is his master.” and “I am the city of knowledge and ʿAlī is the gate to that city.”.

As to the first:

عن شعبة، عن سلمة بن كهيل، قال: سمعت أبا الطفيل يحدث، عن أبي سريحة ؓ - أو زيد بن أرقم ز (شك شعبة) - عن النبي ﷺ، قال: من كنت مولاه فعلي مولاه. وقد روى شعبة هذا الحديث، عن ميمون أبي عبد الله، عن زيد بن أرقم ؓ عن النبي ﷺ

“Shuʿbah relates it from Salmah bin Kuhayl: I heard it from Abū Tufayl that Abū Sariḥah ؓ - or Zayd bin Arqam ؓ relates that the Prophet ﷺ said: “One who has me as his master (*mawla*) has ʿAlī as his master.”

“Shuʿbah ؓ has related the tradition from Maymūn Abū ʿAbdullāh ؓ, who related it on the authority of Zayd bin Arqām ؓ and he has related it from the Prophet ﷺ.

ʿAsqalānī says in *Fathu-l-bārī* (7:74): Tirmidhī and Nasāʾī narrated the tradition and it is supported by numerous chains of transmission. Albānī says in *Silsilat-ul-aḥādīth* that it is *saḥīḥah* (4:331 #1750) and its chain of authorities is *saḥīḥ* (sound) according to the conditions of Bukḥārī and Muslim. Additionally both of these sayings are widely recognised by both Sunni and Shīʿa scholars.

And as to the second:

“I am the city of knowledge and ʿAlī is its gate.” It was related by al-Ḥākim, at-Tabaranī and others. It was also related by at-Tirmidhī with the wording, “I am the House of Wisdom, and ʿAlī is its Door.”

Moreover ʿAlī ؑ did not fail the Prophet ﷺ in this position of gate or *bāb* as evidenced by the vibrant spiritual traditions descending from him in the spirituality of both his Sunnī and Shīʿah students.

The Prophet ﷺ insured that his legacy would be continued by the formal institution of °Alī ؑ at Ghadīr al-Khumm (غدير الخم) and also in many ḥadīth. He said to °Alī ؑ, ‘You are from me, and I am from you (*anta minni wa ana minka*).’ And other sayings such as: °Alī ؑ ‘is as my own soul (*ka-naḥsi*)’ and °Alī ؑ is with the Qur’ān and the Qur’ān is with °Alī ؑ. They will not separate from each other until they return to me at the [paradisal] pool (*al-hawd*).’

It is important to realise that during the 26 years of the first three Righteous Khulafāh, Abū Bakr, °Umar and °Uthhman ؓ, °Alī ؑ, in addition to aiding the Khulafah ؓ, with his sought for advice on the many complex legal and political issues they had to face, was busy teaching Muslims from all across the growing Muslim world and initiated the very first operative school of °Islāmīc Spirituality (*taṣawwuf*) which has given rise to what is popularly called Ṣūfism that was transmitted through Sayidinā °Alī ؑ to his sons, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn ؓ and Sayyidina Ḥasan al-Baṣrī ؓ (who °Alī ؑ said was from his own blessed family as the Prophet ﷺ said of both Bilāl and Salman al-Farsi ؓ). From these three have come all the designated teachers ؓ (*shuyukh*) of the Ṣūfī Orders save the Naqshbandī who trace back to Abu Bakr ؓ and the Uwaysi who trace back to Sayyidnā al-°Uways ؓ.

This line of transmission continues into the living present by the process of °*ijazat* (license) and °*idhīn* (permission) by which one shaykh who has received the permission confirms a successor or an inheritor who continues the teaching of the school of °Alī ؑ just as he himself received license and permission from the Prophet ﷺ.

In turn a shaykh of *taṣawwuf* spends years in training in this school in order to develop his (and, in certain circumstances, her) character, mannerisms, daily schedule, outer being, acts of worship, and knowledge under the guidance of his or her shaykh. They learn the essence of worship and practical implications of abandonment of attachment to the life of this world from those who are models of *taqwah* or G-d-consciousness.

Moreover many of the shuyukh, in addition to their more purely spiritual studies, often spend years mastering the traditional °Islāmīc legal sciences of Qur’ān, tafsīr, ḥadīth fiqh, etc. Each aspect of their training further connects them through chains of scholars to the Prophet ﷺ, who was sent to connect people to their Sustainer.

When you enter the company of such shūyūkh, their knowledge and extensive experience allows them to assess your spiritual state, and hence advise you on the best ‘medicine’ to cure the diseases of your heart. Just as a doctor is trained to cure physical ailments, so the scholars of tasawwuf treat the maladies of the diseased heart.

Regrettably, as I mentioned earlier, in our times such has developed a certain Deformist (though they of course refer to them-selves as reformers) mindset now becoming widespread, mis-leadingly labeled “Salafist”, “Deobandi”, “Wahhabi” or “Takfrī.

This mentality strongly condemns the intellectual diversity of the rational and spiritual legacies of ʾIslām expressed in the legal theories of the schools of fiqh, in theology, in philosophy, in Sufi transformative practice and metaphysics (*taṣawwuf*), in favor of a coerced doctrinal uniformity characterized by an anti-rationalist intellectual minimalism. This current Deformist trend seeks to impose a shallow conformity rather than depth and diversity in religious knowledge, to coerce others to think and talk as they themselves do, and views everything in black-and-white rather than in full color. The intent of Deformists is to monopolize and control the thinking of Muslims by means of a tyranny over thought and speech that is in reality a serious abuse of authority.

The cruel ugly face of intolerance and ignorance is evident in many parts of the Muslim world including the killing of innocents in ‘sectarian’ violence in Pakistan, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Mali, Nigeria etc where grenades are tossed into *masajid* during communal prayers, bombs detonated during religious gatherings. Persecution and the denial of rights enforced against minority groups adhering to a particular doctrinal expression of ʾIslām condemned as heretical. Psycho-physical coercion of doctrinal “deviants” identified as security threats and often imprisoned by the “State”. Intimidation or purging of individuals from state, public and civic organs by overzealous guardians of “official” ʾIslāmic organizations that police thought and speech conformity in the name of religious ‘authority’ characteristic of the Deformist mentality. An uncompromising “my way or the highway” mentality condemnation of diversity, critical thinking and spiritual experience represented by other streams of ʾIslāmic thought and practice which has produced a severe negative effect that is spreading across the Muslim world very much like a computer virus.⁴

4. I wish to acknowledge here the thoughts of Dr. Karim Crow on this subject.

Hence the importance of this Spiritual Transmission and the Spiritual Science derived from the Qur'ān and the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ which bring about the purification of the heart, for surely there is a time coming which is –

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ • إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

yawma la yanfa°u mālun walā banūn

°illa man ata-llāha bi-qalbin salīm

the Day when neither wealth nor sons will be of any use
except for the one who comes to Allāh with a sound heart.

(Sūrah aṣḥ-Shu°arrā° 26:88-89)

Although the development of Taṣawwuf can be historically compared with that of the other sciences, there is an intrinsic superiority in Taṣawwuf which should be well remembered. This superiority lies in that the expansion of the science of spiritual development is based on experience and direct observation confirmed in its broad pattern by thousands of travellers on the upward path of the soul, whereas the other sciences mainly owe their formulation to reason and conjecture. All, of course, are founded on tradition, that is, the Qur'ān and its living commentary by the Prophet ﷺ and his followers ﷺ, but the process of later elaboration has this fundamental difference. It cannot be contested that direct experience, especially when it is common to large numbers of people, is a vastly more authoritative source of knowledge than rational speculation. For instance, after the data provided by revelation and tradition the chief instrument in the development of *Fiqh* is *Qiyas* (analogy) or *Ra'y* (opinion). The main pillar of the science of Ḥadīth is *Jarh* and *Ta°dil*, which means the critical examination of the reliability of the reporters of a certain ḥadīth in addition to its subject matter. Obviously these processes are rational and speculative.

The development of Taṣawwuf, however, has consisted in the progressively detailed expounding of the spiritual experience constituting the inner heritage of the Prophet ﷺ which is love (*ḥabb*) and mercy (*raḥmah*) which has no content of conjecture or opinion.

This vital element has resulted in a remarkable unanimity among the proponents of this science throughout the ages, and whatever differences that exist are those of emphasis or mode of expression and do not show any real cleavage in the essential unity.



مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ
وَلَكِنْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

mā kāna muḥammadun abāa ʾaḥadin mir-rijālikum
wa lākin rasūla-llāhi wa khātama-n-nabiyyīna
wa kāna- llāhu bi-kulli shayʾin ʿalīmā

Muḥammad is not the father of any of your men,
but the Messenger of Allāh and the Final Seal of the Prophets.
Allāh has knowledge of all things.
(Sūratu-l-ʾAḥzāb 33:40)



In the end is our beginning.

The term *Khatam an-nabuwwah* is derived from the Qurʾānic phrase *Khatamu-n-Nabiyyin* “seal of the prophets”. [al-Aḥzāb 33:40] *Khatama al-ʾAmala* is equivalent to ‘*Faragha min al-ʾAlmalī*’ which means ‘to finish the task.’

Khatama al-Inaʾ means “The vessel has been closed and sealed so that nothing can go into it, nor can its contents spill out.”

Khatam-al-kitāb conveys the meaning ‘The letter has been enclosed and sealed so that it is finally secured.’

Khatama-ʿAla-al-Qalb means “The heart has been sealed so that it cannot perceive anything new nor can it forswear what it has already imbibed.”

Khatamul ʾAwliyāʾ means ‘Seal of the Friends of Allāh ﷺ’ – a title bestowed upon ʿAlī رضي الله عنه by the Prophet ﷺ.

Khatamu-Kulli-Mashrubin implies ‘the final taste that is left in the mouth after one had tasted something.’

Khatimatu Kulli Shayʾinn ʿAqibatuhu wa ʾĀkhiratuhu means “The end in the case of everything denotes its doom and ultimate finish.”

Khatim-ul-Qawm ʾĀkhirhuum means “The last man in the tribe.”

Khatmul-Shayʾa Balagha ʾĀkhirahu conveys the sense, “To end a thing means to carry it to its ultimate limit.”

The term *Khatam-i-Qurʾān* is used in the similar sense and the closing verses of Qurʾānic Surahs are referred to as *Khawātim*.

For this reason all linguists and commentators agree that *Khātamu-l-Nabiyyin* means “The Last in the line of Prophets.”

However, it has been argued by various popular scholars of °Islām that the real meaning of *Kḥatam* (ختم) is a seal (see *Tāju-l-Arūs*, *Lisānu-l-°Arab*, and *Qamūs*), and the phrase should be interpreted in the light of this meaning. Ibn Ḳhaldun says it is wrong to interpret the word *Kḥatam* in this verse to mean the last or the end (see *Muqaddama* Vol. II, p. 54, Paris). He holds that rather that the word *Kḥatam* denotes the consummation and completion of a thing, which he further explains by the words, authenticity, perfection and validity. When a seal is put to a letter it becomes authentic and complete. The seal may be put in the end or in the beginning. According to him, therefore, *Kḥātama-n-Nabiyyīn* (خاتم النبيين) would mean the truest and the most perfect of prophets and not the last in point of time. It refers to his status and place among the prophets and not to the time of his advent.

The most commonly held view about the phrase “Seal of the Prophets” is that “seal” means finality and end.

Some scholars have translated and interpreted the word “seal” in terms of honor and superiority, instead of the finality of the prophethood. But the consensus of the Muslim community regards the denial or doubt on finality of prophethood as apostasy, since Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is regarded as the last prophet in accord with the Word of Allāh ﷻ in the Qur’ān. (see 33:40 above)

And this is according to many ḥadīth accepted as sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*) by both Sunnis and Shi’ah,

“The tribe of Israel was guided by prophets. When a prophet passed away, another prophet succeeded him. no prophet will come after me; only my successors (or inheritors) will succeed me.” al-Bukḥarī.

The Prophet ﷺ affirmed: “My position in relation to the prophets who came before me can be explained by the following example: A man erected a building and adorned this edifice with great beauty, but he left an empty niche, in the corner where just one brick was missing. People looked around the building and marvelled at its beauty, but wondered why a brick was missing from that niche? I am like that one missing brick and I am the last in the line of the Prophets.” al-Bukḥarī, *Kitābu-l-Manāqib* (as also above)]

“So I came, and in me the line of Prophets has ended.” Muslim, *Kitābu-l-Fadā’il*, Bābu-l-Kḥatimīn-Nabiyyīn also in at-Tirmidhī.

Also in a ḥadīth on Jabir ibn Abd-Allāh ﷺ where the last sentence reads, “It is in me that the line of Prophets came to its final end.”

The Prophet ﷺ told ʿAlī رضي الله عنه, “You are related to me as Hārūn was related to Mūsā. But no Apostle will come after me.” Bukḥarī and Muslim. This tradition is also recorded in al-Bukḥarī and Muslim in the account concerning the battle of Tabūk also. The *Musnad* records two traditions narrated by Saʿd ibn Abi Waqqas on this subject. The last sentence in one of these traditions runs as follows: “Behold there is no prophethood after me.”

Detailed accounts of the traditions report that on the eve of his departure for the battle of Tabūk, the Prophet ﷺ had resolved to leave ʿAlī رضي الله عنه behind him in order to look after the defense and supervise the affairs of Madinah. The hypocrites thereupon began to spread insinuations and rumors about ʿAlī رضي الله عنه who went to the Prophet ﷺ and said: “Oh Prophet of Allāh, are you leaving me behind among women and children?” On this occasion in order to set his mind at peace the Prophet ﷺ said: “You are related to me as was Hārūn to Mūsā.” In other words as Mūsā رضي الله عنه on the Mount at-Tur, had left Hārūn رضي الله عنه behind to look after the tribe of Israel, so I [Muḥammad] leave you behind to look after the defense of Madinah.” At the same time apprehending that this comparative allusion to Hārūn رضي الله عنه might later on give rise to heresies, the Prophet ﷺ immediately made it clear that “There will be no Prophet after me.” Abu Dawud Tayalisi, and ʾImām Aḥmad.

So, one may ask, what is left? How do we go forward? In one word: Walayah (ولاية). And what is *walayah*?

Walayah, is that which empowers, gives authority/guardianship to a person, community, or a country that is under the direction and rule in behalf of another. A ‘Walī’ (ولي) is someone who has ‘Walayah’ (authority or guardianship) over somebody else. For example, in fiqh, a father is the walī of his children. The word Wāl holds a special importance in ʾIslāmic spiritual life and it is used with various meanings, which relate to its different functions, which include: “next of kin, ally, friend, helper, guardian, patron, and saint or friend of Allāh”. In Islam, the phrase *walīyu l-lāh* (ولي الله) can also be used to denote one vested with the ‘friendship of Allāh ﷻ’: it is an Arabic word derived from the root *w l y* (ولي), which carries the meanings of “friendship, assistance”, and “authority and also power”. The word holds a special importance in ʾIslāmic spiritual life relating to its different functions, which include: “next of kin, ally, friend, helper, guardian, patron, and *saint* or friend of Allāh”.

In its connotation of sainthood, the word describes an innate sense of selflessness and separation from one's own wants in favor of awareness of being "under the dominion of the all-living, self-subsistent One and of the need to acquire nearness to the necessarily existent being – who is Allāh ﷻ."

Individuals that have attained this level are believed to be favored and live in a state of nearness with, or closeness to, Allāh ﷻ.

اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَخْرِجُهُمْ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ

allāhu waliyyu-l-ladhīna ʾāmanū
yukhrijuhum mina-ḍh-ḍhulumāti ʾila-n-nūr

Allah is the Protecting Friend of those who have faith (ʾimān).
He brings them out of the darkness into the light.

(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:257)

أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

ʾalāʾa ʾinna ʾawliyāʾ-allāhi lā khawfun ʿalayhim wa lā hum yahzanūn

Surely the friends of Allāh have no fear and they shall not grieve.

(Surāh Yunūs 10:62)

One who has been favored with this type of friendship is called a *walī* or *waliullāh* which can be translated into English as a "saint" though that is not exactly its meaning in Arabic. ʾAwliyaʾ-ullāh may also be translated as a word used to describe a certain group of people selected by Allāh ﷻ from among millions of others to be "His chosen friends" because of their closeness and intimacy. For this reason a *walī* is thought to have favor in the "eyes" of Allāh ﷻ.

In the Qurʾān, *walayah* is expressed in the fable of the rich but immoral owner of two gardens and his poor but pious companion. The rich man ends up a loser despite his prosperity and power, for ultimately, the *walayah* belongs to Allāh ﷻ, the Truth (*al-ḥaqq* الحق)

هٰذَا لَكَ الْوَلَايَةُ لِلَّهِ الْحَقُّ هُوَ خَيْرٌ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ عُقْبًا

hunalika-l-walayatu li-l-lāhi-l-ḥaqqi
huwa khayrun ṭhawaban wa khayrun ʿuqābā

wilayat (only) comes from Allāh, the Absolute Truth.

He is the Best to reward, and the Best to grant success.

(Sūratu-l-Kahf 18:44)

But no matter how deep the meaning of this, there is a still deeper meaning to the *walayah*, which is in the exegesis of Qurʾān and that which is sealed within it. Here we reach the meaning of meaning.

وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا
وَمَا يَذْكُرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

wa mā ya^olamu ta^owīlahu illa-llāhu wa-r-rāsikhūna fi- l^oilmi
yaqūlūna ^oāmannā bi-hi kullun miñ ^oindi rabbinnā
wa mā yadhḥḥakkaru ^oillā ^oūlu-l-albābā

But none know its meaning except Allāh
and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge,
they say: “We believe in it, all is from our Sustainer.”
And none will remember except the people of understanding.
(Sūrah ^oĀl ^oImrān 3:7)

The crucial deep part of the ^oāyat is; “none know its meaning except Allāh and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge”.

There are two alternate readings of this line. One reads,
“none know its meaning except Allāh. And those who are firmly
grounded in knowledge say: “We believe in it, all is from our Sus-
tainer (or Lord/*rabbi*).”

the other reading is as we have it above:

“none know its meaning except Allāh and those who are firmly
grounded in knowledge”

The key is whether you read it as “and” or you come to a full stop –
which is to say a period, and begin a new sentence beginning, “And
those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say...”

This, at first glance, may appear to be a trivial thing but the con-
junction, which is the little word “and”, represents a major divide in
thinking between those who hold that only Allāh ﷻ can know the
meaning of *tā^owīl* (تَأْوِيلُهُ) which, according to a fairly neutral source
means “the esoteric interpretation of the Qur^oān...or the quest for
its hidden, inner meanings.” It was a synonym of conventional in-
terpretation in its earliest use, but came to mean a process of diving
deep and getting to the most fundamental understandings of the
Qur^oān. Thus, *Tā^owīl* is an interpretation of the Qur^oān which in-
cludes attribution of esoteric or mystic meanings to the text by the
interpreter. In this respect, its method is different from the conven-
tional exegesis of the Qur^oān, called *tafsīr* (تفسير). Esoteric (*bāṭinī*/
باطني) interpretations do not usually contradict the conventional (in
this context called exoteric or *dhāhirī*/ظاهري) interpretations; instead,
they discuss the deeper inner levels of meaning.

An ḥadīth which states that the Qurʾān has an inner meaning, and that this inner meaning conceals a yet deeper inner meaning, and so on down to seven levels of meaning, has sometimes been used in support of this view. Also the Prophet ﷺ said, “surely the Qurʾān has an outward aspect (*dhāhir*), an inward aspect (*bāṭin*) an ending and a beginning.” This tradition is related by Ibn Masʿūd ؓ who is one of the scholars of exegesis on his own authority.

In the verse quoted above as we noted, there is a full stop between “...except Allāh” and “And those who...” and reading this way the verse attributes the knowledge of the hidden meanings only to Qurʾān. By removing the “and” it becomes: “...no one knows its hidden meaning except Allāh ﷻ and those firmly grounded in knowledge” (*ʾūlu-l-albāb* **وُلُوْا الْاَلْبَابِ**) which suggests that those firmly grounded in knowledge can extract these hidden meanings (*tāʾwīl*).

Both forms are valid in the Arabic language; Sunni Muslims usually read the verse with the stop, while Shīʿah Muslims usually read it without the stop, and consider their ʾImāms, who, according to their understanding, are the heirs to the knowledge of the Prophet ﷺ, to be authorized to explain these hidden meanings. In Ṣūfī tradition, it is believed these esoteric meanings of the Qurʾān can be extracted through mystic experiences, and, as such, esoteric interpretations presented by their teachers (*shuyūkh*) are considered authentic. Today, the majority of Muslims (except Salafis) respect Ṣūfī interpretations at least as an alternative or other view within ʾIslām.³¹

Some examples include:

1. Interpreting religious terms as describing inner qualities:

These interpretations are sometimes mystic comments on religious concepts. For example in “Say: Oh unbelievers! I do not worship what you worship” (109:1-2), the term ‘*unbelievers*’ is taken to refer to one’s individual self or *nafs*.

2. Interpreting Qurʾānic stories from a mystic perspective:

These interpretations are aimed at explanation of the mystic meaning of the stories and are found frequently in Sufi poems and prose. For example, in *The Conference of the Birds*, Attar, in reference to the Qurʾānic story of descent of ʾĀdam and Hawāʾ ؑ to Earth, writes that “ʾĀdam ؑ was too lofty to be satisfied with paradise and an unseen messenger cried to him to leave his attachments to everything that hampers his journey towards Allāh ﷻ.”

3. Poetic interpretations:

These interpretations view Qurʾān from a poetic perspective and seek to find subtle meanings related to divine love in the verses, an example found frequently in Sufi writings being the interpretation of “By the glorious morning light, And by the night when it is still.” (93:1-2) as reference by Allāh ﷻ to the face of the Prophet ﷺ.

4. Interpreting a verse differently from the conventional meaning:

For example in his book *Tamhīdat*, Hamadani interprets “The fire of Allāh kindles a blaze, which mounts to the hearts” (104: 6-7) which conventionally refers to the punishment in hell, as passion of divine love and interprets “the day Earth becomes that which is not Earth” which conventionally describes the day of judgment actually is a description of the moment of spiritual awakening or enlightenment.



But in truth, no matter how exalted or sublime these various interpretations may be they, in the end, are not exactly what we are talking about, or rather, they are ancillary but not crucial to the sense of meaning which we are trying to explicate.

Somewhere during the past five years a major Islamic organisation in North America released an alarming set of figures which revealed that six out of ten young Muslims in the West are leaving ʾIslām – leaving not because they are opposed to ʾIslām or don’t even necessarily dislike it but rather ʾIslām has become *irrelevant* to their lives in the West where, on the surface at least, they have every imaginable freedom. Furthermore one can easily imagine that if their brothers and sisters in nominally Muslim countries or civilisations had the same degree of freedom without license, that they would have very much the same reaction or do the same things.

Functionally this means that at first they begin skipping jouʿmah prayers, then tarawīḥ prayers, then they may wind up dating or marrying a non-Muslim, male or female, then they stop showing up even for ʿEid prayers or other community gatherings and within time they are just somebody whose name happens to be Fāṭimah or Ayesha or Khadijah or Muḥammad or Ali or Abdullah, all of whom have some fond but distant memories of their youth and a smattering of their parents language if their parents were immigrants.

But so far as ʾIslam goes, even its most exoteric form it doesn’t mean much except maybe sometimes politically in the sense they will take part in rallies for Palestine or Syria or Kashmir etc.

Much is made of the many non-Muslims who now revert to ʾIslām but it is not certain that even those numbers match the outflow, and even still one must consider the effect this will have on the future.

Often the irrelevancy comes from the insipid boring droning inconsequential khutbahs they hear on Jouʿmah. Recently I met a young Muslim who told me I was the first “beard” he had ever really talked to – rather like the relationship between anarchists and “suits”.

The Qurʾan, though it is the seal of Prophecy (*nubuwwa*), remains for most of these young people, and indeed their working parents, a closed book gathering dust on the shelf, opened only when someone dies so that they can read, often haltingly, Sūrah Yā Sīīn.

So when I talk and write about “meaning” it is not only from a scholarly point of view but, more crucially, from the point of view that we need to find a way to make ʾIslām, the Prophet ﷺ and the Qurʾan more truly relevant in this time and to do this we must find those among us who are capable of discerning the deep meanings (*tāʾwīl*) of the Qurʾan and not leave it as a past “closed” revelation.

In some of my talks I have mentioned how in by-gone days people would often travel a thousand miles to collect or hear one ḥadīth.

In our time we need to inspire, especially the youth, to travel as far as they must to meet one of the ʾūlu-l-*albāb* or people of deep understanding who can both open up the Last Revelation to them and open the souls of these young people and the best of their elders.

Alḥamdulillāh that there remain on this earth such people – usually the students of that Gate of Knowledge, Sayyidina ʿAlī رضي الله عنه – who for some thirty and more generations have remained faithful to his blessed teaching and have been granted ʾizajāt and idḥin to continue to pass on those teaching. But knowing this you should also know it is almost impossible to find these teachings anymore among either the Sunnis or the Shīʿah who have become lost in the past. trapped by time, mired in politics and war, unaware that politics are filth (السياسي النجسي). Yes! You may find piety and goodness, alḥamdulillāh, but you will not easily find the answer to life’s pressing problems. Again I plead with the youth and their elders, renounce self seeking, remember Allāh ﷻ and seek his friends and become –

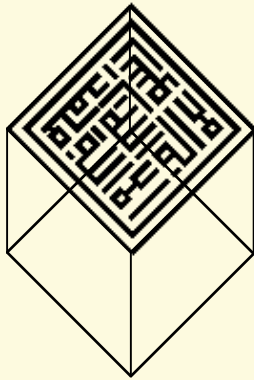
مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

man ʾata-llāha bi qalbin salīm

(one) who brings to Allāh a whole heart

(Sūrah ash-Shuʿarrāʾ 26:89)





noon hierographers
green mountain
virginia
usa